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ABSTRACT

This report describes barriers to the successful recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education programs and services, and offers recommendations for ensuring successful recruitment and retention of this population. Barriers to recruitment identified include: inadequate identification practices, too little attention given to non-intellectual barriers to achievement, too little attention given to learning style preferences, over-reliance on quantitative definitions of underachievement, and lack of family involvement in the educational process. Placement factors which educators should consider include service options, demographic variables, family concerns, and academic needs. Educators also need to address the following barriers to retention: classroom climate; the need for multicultural focus in education, curriculum, and inservice training for teachers; counseling personnel trained in gifted and multicultural education; recruitment of racially and culturally diverse teachers in gifted education; increased parental/family involvement; increased collaboration among professionals; early identification; and program evaluation. Recommendations are offered in the areas of: (1) equitable identification and assessment; (2) compatibility of placement; (3) increased emphasis on retention; (4) needs assessment, especially regarding underrepresentation of African Americans in gifted programs; (5) collaboration with allies in the African American community; (6) collaboration with a variety of relevant organizations; and (7) equitable allocation of resources. (Contains approximately 175 references.) (DB)

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The Recruitment and Retention of African-American Students in Gifted Education Programs: Implications and Recommendations

Donna Y. Ford, Ph.D.
The University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

September 1994
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The Recruitment and Retention of African American Students in Gifted Education Programs: Implications and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT

The identification and placement of African American students in gifted programs has received increased attention in recent years, primarily due to Javits legislation and the stellar efforts of Torrance, Passow, Frasier, Renzulli, Baldwin, and others who have devoted a considerable amount of research to this issue. While their collective efforts have considerably influenced the recruitment of African American youth into programs and services for gifted students, one shortcoming has been an almost exclusive attention to the identification and placement process. This aspect, referred to herein as "recruitment," represents only one crucial element in increasing the representation of African American students in gifted programs. Equally important, but often overlooked, is the "retention" of these students in gifted education once placed. What mechanisms exist to ensure that, once identified and placed, gifted African American students remain in the program? Do they feel a sense of belonging and inclusion? That academic as well as social and emotional needs are met?

The poor representation of African American students in gifted programs may occur for numerous reasons. These students may complain of: (1) being a minority within a minority because they are often the only or one of few African American students in the gifted program. These feelings may be more likely when students attend predominantly White schools and gifted programs; (2) feeling isolated from White classmates; (3) experiencing intense and frequent peer pressures from African American youth not in the gifted program; (4) feeling misunderstood by teachers who often lack substantive preparation in multicultural education; (5) feeling misunderstood by teachers who do not understand the nature of giftedness, especially among culturally and racially diverse students; (6) feeling misunderstood by family members who do not understand the nature of giftedness.

The primary purpose of this paper is to describe not only barriers to the successful recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education programs and services, but also to present recommendations for ensuring that the recruitment and retention process is successful.

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The Recruitment and Retention of African American Students in Gifted Education Programs: Implications and Recommendations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

A primary purpose of gifted education is to meet the academic needs and interests of students in ways that will broaden and expand their knowledge and talents, as well as prepare them for rewarding and productive lives when formal schooling ends. Gifted education is designed to offer students who demonstrate exceptional talent learning opportunities that are commensurate with their abilities and interest—opportunities that are seldom available in the regular classroom setting.

Historically, however, there has been much concern and debate regarding the extent to which minority and economically challenged children have not been identified and placed in gifted education programs. Nationally, estimates are that from 20 to 50 percent of minority students are underrepresented in gifted education programs (Erlanger & Alamprese, 1988; U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

In response to this issue, numerous articles have appeared in the literature calling for more equitable practices in identifying and serving racially and culturally diverse gifted students. Legislation has also been directed at increasing the participation of minority and economically challenged students in gifted education programs. The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Act of 1988, Title IV, Part B of the ESEA marks the culmination of the efforts of gifted education proponents and seeks to ensure equity for gifted minority and economically challenged children. Its goal is to provide assistance to programs and projects, including:

(1) preservice and inservice training (including fellowships) for personnel (including leadership personnel) involved in the education of gifted and talented students;
(2) establishment and operation of model projects and exemplary programs for the identification and education of gifted and talented students, including summer programs and cooperative programs involving business, industry, and education;
(3) strengthening the capability of state educational agencies and institutions of higher education to provide leadership and assistance to local educational agencies and nonprofit private schools in the planning, operation, and improvement of programs for the identification and education of gifted and talented students;
(4) programs of technical assistance and information dissemination; and
(5) carrying out (through the National Center for Research and Development in the Education of Gifted and Talented Children and Youth established pursuant to subsection c):

(a) research on methods and techniques for identifying and teaching gifted and talented students, and

(b) program evaluations, surveys, and the collection, analysis, and development of information needed to accomplish the purpose of this part. (Sec. 3062 [b])

Sec. 3065 (a) defines the general priority:

> (a) GENERAL PRIORITY - In the administration of this part the Secretary shall give highest priority -
>
> (1) to the identification of gifted and talented students who may not be identified through traditional assessment methods (including economically disadvantaged individuals, individuals of limited English proficiency, and individuals with handicaps) and to education programs designed to include gifted and talented students from such groups.

Despite these initiatives and efforts, too little has changed in actual practice. This paper describes not only barriers to the successful recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education programs and services, but also presents recommendations for ensuring that the recruitment and retention process is successful.

The reader will notice that some of the issues raised are not unique to African American students; they are issues shared by many children of color. Similarly, readers are reminded that gifted African American students share many of the concerns and experiences as gifted students in general. Thus, no claim is made within this paper that gifted African American students live in a vacuum—they share concerns of both other minority students and gifted students. Certainly, more research is needed that focuses specifically on gifted African American (and other minority) students.

Barriers to Recruitment

Several themes have emerged in the literature regarding the underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs. Themes related to recruitment barriers (i.e., identification and placement barriers) include: inadequate identification practices; a lack of substantive training in multicultural education among teachers of the gifted; a lack of substantive preparation among teachers to work with gifted students; too little focus on non-intellectual factors (affective, social, psychological, and cultural) that impede achievement; quantitative-based definitions of underachievement; and a lack of meaningful parent and family involvement.

Factors Affecting Identification

(1) Inadequate Identification Practices

There are numerous problems associated with current identification practices. First, gifted students are most often identified by standardized intelligence and achievement tests (Archambault, et al. 1993). For gifted African American students who traditionally do not test well, this primary or exclusive reliance on standardized tests is exclusionary. Test bias, lack of validity, and poor reliability make standardized tests ineffective for identifying and assessing giftedness among African American students.

Second, although there are many definitions and theories of giftedness, no states have adopted the contemporary and inclusive definitions espoused by Gardner (1987) and Sternberg (1985), and only one state had adopted Renzulli's (1978) definition (see Cassidy & Hossler, 1992). However, unlike many other theories, these theories promise to capture the strengths of gifted African American students.

Third, most gifted students are served in the regular classroom. More often than not, teachers have received little or no training in gifted education. This lack of training can inhibit their effectiveness at identifying and educating gifted students.

Fourth, most African American students are taught by White teachers, the majority of whom have received little or no training in multicultural education. This lack of training in both gifted and multicultural education hinders significantly the ability of teachers to identify and serve gifted African American students. Similarly, most school counselors and psychologists are not adequately trained in either gifted or multicultural education. Thus, not only may gifted African American students be overlooked by teachers, they can be overlooked by counselors and psychologists.

(2) Too Little Attention to Non-Intellectual Barriers to Achievement

Gifted African American students share the concerns of gifted students in general—poor peer relations, negative peer pressures, perfectionism, heightened sensitivity, concern over social and world issues, and excessive expectations from significant others. However, these concerns may escalate in gifted African American students who must contend with (a) *social and environmental issues* (e.g., racism and discrimination, lowered teacher expectations, high rates of poverty); (b) *cultural issues* (e.g., cultural conflict and differences relative to values, priorities, and learning style preferences; and (c) *psychological issues* (e.g., racial identity, self-concept, locus of control). These issues often reinforce or exacerbate underachievement among gifted African American students; they also hinder effective identification and placement.

(3) Too Little Attention to Learning Style Preferences

Several researchers have found differences in learning styles between African American and White students. Such differences have numerous implications for the identification of gifted African American students. The extent to which gifted African American students are global versus analytic learners, visual versus auditory, highly mobile versus less mobile, and less peer-oriented versus more peer-oriented will affect their learning, achievement, motivation, and school performance. Because of learning style preferences, African American students may not be identified as gifted by teachers nor assessed adequately by standardized tests.

(4) Over-Reliance on Quantitative Definitions of Underachievement

Most definitions of underachievement expect gifted students to have a high test score accompanied by lower than expected performance. By relying exclusively on test scores to determine underachievement, educators overlook many capable and promising gifted African American students (e.g., students who test poorly due to test bias, test anxiety, poor test-taking skills, lack of motivation).

(5) Lack of Family Involvement in the Educational Process

African American parents may find it difficult to become involved in their children's education because they hold negative perceptions about school and/or have had negative experiences with schools. Parents of less affluent economic backgrounds, parents living in different family/household structures, or parents with lower educational levels may be apprehensive about becoming involved in the schools. Further, parents and extended family members are not always encouraged by school personnel to be actively and substantively involved. This lack of parent and family involvement can hinder the school success of gifted African American students.

Factors Affecting Placement

In making placement decisions, educators should consider: (a) the implications of each service option on the academic, social, and emotional well-being of gifted African American students (e.g., pullout vs. self-contained vs. enrichment, etc.); (b) the demographic characteristics of students and faculty; (c) family concerns, students' academic needs and learning style preferences; and (d) the nature and extent of the prospective teacher's training and experience with gifted African American students.

Service Options

The services offered to gifted students are quite diverse. For African American students, it is important to examine the type of program. For example, some of these students may feel uncomfortable with pullout programs where they are bused to a different school. In many cases, this type of program can contribute to or exacerbate negative pressures from peers. That is, peers may not only be curious, but also envious, about what they perceive as special attention to the gifted African American student.

Demographic Variables

The demographic characteristics of the gifted program (e.g., students' and teachers' ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status) are also important placement considerations. The more culturally and racially diverse the program (e.g., staff and students), the more likely African American students will sense a goodness of fit, a sense of cohesion and belonging. African American students who feel socially isolated and alienated may experience both fright and flight from the gifted program.

Family Concerns

Interviews with students and their families about concerns or problems are needed when educators make placement decisions For instance, parents who have had negative school experiences will be hesitant and/or resistant to becoming involved in the school and the gifted program—the more negative the experience, the more the resistance.

Academic Needs

More information must be gathered on gifted African American students' shortcomings in basic skills and their learning style preferences when making placement decisions. Ideally, we must make all efforts to place gifted African American students with teachers who are able and willing to accommodate diverse learning styles and skill levels in the classroom—teachers who are effective at differentiating the curriculum and otherwise meeting individual student needs. Another option is to match, to the extent possible, teaching styles and learning styles.

Barriers to Retention

To overcome the possibility of poor retention or high attrition, the following variables must be addressed by educators: (a) classroom climate; (b) teacher preparation in gifted education; (c) multicultural preparation for teachers; (d) multicultural curriculum; (e) preparation for counselors in gifted education and multicultural education; (f) increased faculty diversity relative to race and gender; (g) meaningful parent/family involvement; (h) collaboration among school personnel and other professionals at all levels; and (i) program evaluation.

Classroom Climate

Classroom climates have a significant impact on students' achievement; while some classrooms are warm and nurturing, others are cold and forebearing. When gifted African American students have teachers who are empathetic, accepting, understanding, and genuine, and who foster a "curriculum of caring" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), teachers can expect gains in their academic achievement and self-concept, as well as increased intrinsic motivation, attendance and class participation, higher levels of thinking, and decreased feelings of alienation.

Multicultural Education and Curriculum

Multicultural education and curriculum promotes mutual respect and understanding, comradeship, collegiality, and social and cultural awareness and understanding. It also examines conflicts across cultural groups and seeks solutions to historical and persistent inequities. Gifted African American learners are hungry for curriculum that is enriched with content reflecting diversity and the inadequacies of racism, sexism, and discrimination.

Because the infusion of multicultural education into the content is empowering for gifted African American students, multiculturalism must continually permeate the curriculum. For instance, a Black History month each February is insufficient for instilling pride among gifted African American students relative to their racial and cultural heritage.

Multicultural Training for Teachers

Comprehensive multicultural preparation can (re)educate teachers and other school personnel so that inaccurate perceptions and uninformed beliefs do not restrict the achievement of gifted African American students. Too often, gifted African American students go unidentified because the culture of the school ignores, misunderstands, or degrades their family, community, and cultural backgrounds.

Counseling Personnel Trained in Gifted and Multicultural Education

School counselors and psychologists must be trained or re-trained to work more effectively with the gifted student population. A significant portion of this preparation should also be in multicultural counseling. Gifted African American students need a place to turn emotionally in order to express their concerns. Individual counseling, group counseling, peer support groups, bibliotherapy, and family therapy are a few promising practices. This support is especially meaningful and effective if imparted by a professional (e.g., teacher or school counselor) who is trained to work with both gifted and culturally diverse students.

Recruitment of Racially and Culturally Diverse Teachers in Gifted Education

The number of African American and minority teachers in gifted programs has not received much attention in the literature. Yet, there is a strong possibility that gifted African American students can go through their entire formal schooling without an African American or minority teacher. This shortage of African American teachers translates into fewer role models and mentors for gifted students in general and minority students in particular. It, therefore, heightens the demand for cultural sensitivity by the school. Such sensitivity includes attention to hiring practices, curriculum and instruction practices, professional development, and increased collaboration with other teachers and school personnel.

Increased Parental/Family Involvement

Parents, a child's first teacher, play an integral role in students' motivation to achieve and succeed academically. Ample data indicate that substantive parent involvement is necessary to enhance the achievement of African American students. We must also involve other family members in the educational process, particularly as African American students are more likely than other youth to live in extended family situations. When *families* are substantively involved in the formal learning process, the probability of both recruiting and retaining gifted African American students increases.

Increased Collaboration Among Professionals

Teachers should form alliances with school counselors and psychologists, as well as other specialized disciplines (e.g., special education, urban education, multicultural education) to gather increased information about meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted African American students. The more professionals involved in the endeavor, either directly or indirectly, the greater will be opportunities for successful recruitment and retention.

Early Identification

Educators are encouraged to examine school records for persistent academic problems or social difficulties. An early examination of underachievement indices is essential, particularly as underachievement among African American students is most common in early elementary (grade 3 or 4); ironically, this is also the time at which most gifted programs begin.

By examining school records, teachers can better understand whether underachievement is subject-specific versus global, situational versus general, chronic versus temporary, and personal, teacher or peer related. Teachers can also explore records for potential indicators of giftedness. The comments of parents and former teachers, inconsistent test scores and grades, discrepancies between subtest scores, and discrepancies between tests, for example, may represent important indicators of potential. This information also helps school personnel gain the details necessary to develop proactive, preventive, and intervention strategies.

Program Evaluation

Educators and decision-makers are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of their gifted program, as well as identification, placement, and retention practices. Important topics relate to the program's philosophy, teacher preparation, program demographics, social and emotional resources, family involvement, student assessment and evaluation, and curriculum and instruction.

Recommendations for Recruitment and Retention

When African American students enter gifted programs, they may need to make significant personal and social adjustments, particularly if they come from programs in which they were the majority. The following recommendations are offered for consideration with respect to the recruitment and retention of gifted African American students.

Identification and Assessment Considerations

Several issues must be considered to ensure that the identification and assessment process is equitable. These considerations include: (a) the program's philosophy regarding identification versus assessment; (b) the definitions and theories of giftedness adopted; (c) the validity and reliability of instruments chosen; (d) attention to cultural diversity in giftedness; (e) attention to noncognitive factors in assessment; (f) multidimensional and multimodal assessment practices; and (g) qualitative definitions of underachievement.

Placement Considerations

African American students are often expected to adapt to gifted programs. The higher the compatibility between the gifted program and African American students, the more positive students' social integration (e.g., feeling connected to peers, teachers, faculty; the overall social life of the program), and the greater the probability that African American students will persist in gifted programs.

Retention Considerations

Retention efforts are likely to be successful when educators set clear expectations for gifted African American students, enhance their school competencies, and increase their opportunities for affiliation and support. School personnel who are committed to the identification and placement of African American students in gifted programs must take a proactive and preventive stance by beginning the identification process early. Educators must also: (a) set clear expectations for gifted African American students; (b) increase their self-awareness relative to area(s) of giftedness, strengths, shortcomings, and learning styles; (c) enhance students' school competence (e.g., research, test-taking, study, and interpersonal communication skills); (d) establish mentorships and cohort/affinity groups; (e) provide comprehensive academic counseling services; (f) provide vocational and career counseling; and (g) provide personal and group counseling services.

Other important strategies for successful recruitment and retention include: developing a student or community needs assessment; identifying allies in the African American community; working within the fields of both gifted and urban education; working with businesses and professional organizations in the African American community; and allocating sufficient resources to increase service options offered to gifted African American students.

Needs Assessment

While the poor representation of African American students may be visually evident, school personnel should also examine the extent and nature of the underrepresentation. For instance, while African American students in general may be underrepresented in gifted education, the problem may be most severe among African American students who are economically challenged, male, or at the secondary level.

Identify Allies in the African American Community

If recruitment and retention efforts are to be successful, educators must communicate with African Americans on an interpersonal level. Building such a relationship requires attending community events and celebrations, finding the *pulse* of the African American community (usually church and religious leaders, retired teachers, business leaders), and showing interest in understanding African American students as individuals.

Work Within and Outside of Gifted Education

It is important to reach beyond the literature in gifted education to work with gifted African American students. Most organizations in urban education, psychology, and counseling, for example, have newsletters and journals with theoretical and empirical data on educational, social, and emotional issues among African American students. While the information may not be specific to "gifted" African American students, it is nonetheless equally relevant and informative.

Allocate Resources

For recruitment and retention to be successful, educators must be willing and able to commit time and fiscal resources. For instance, economically challenged students may require scholarships to participate in summer enrichment programs, to take private lessons in talent area(s), to take college admissions examinations, test-taking workshops and courses, and to participate in other services offered to gifted students. Dollars must also be allocated for the continuing professional education and development of teachers in both gifted education and multicultural education.

Summary and Conclusions

Like all students, gifted African Americans represent a heterogeneous group, which necessitates working with these students as individuals. As such, the issues discussed are meant to guide teachers, counselors, and other school personnel in their work with gifted African American students. While some of the issues presented are unique to African American students, others are not; they are also experienced by other minority youth, both gifted and non-gifted. Our knowledge-base regarding gifted African American students is limited; there are few books, articles, and other scholarly information on these students.

We must pay closer attention to the many factors that affect African American students' participation and representation in gifted programs. Encouraging the potentials and talents of all children requires a broadened vision of giftedness that reflects an understanding that talent varies markedly with cultural, ethnic, economic and linguistic backgrounds (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992). Accordingly, professionals in gifted education must ensure that programs are equitable and defensible, that they are inclusive rather than exclusive, and that minority, economically challenged, and underachieving gifted students have an equal opportunity to learn in a nurturing and stimulating educational environment.

The recommendations for increasing and maintaining the representation of African American students in gifted education programs are not exhaustive; rather, they offer a point from which to begin ensuring the success of all gifted students, particularly among those who have yet to reveal their true capabilities. To continue relying on unidimensional rather than multidimensional assessment strategies, to ignore contemporary theories of intelligence, and to perceive cultural difference and diversity as inconsequential to learning and academic success is to contribute to African American students' poor representation in gifted programs.

To be successful in gifted programs, African American students must feel empowered. Educators can do much to empower gifted African American students. This empowerment comes from having a sense of belonging and connectedness with the gifted program, with students, with teachers, and with the curriculum. Empowerment comes from having teachers who understand and respect cultural diversity, and who promote multiculturalism. It comes from enriching and diversifying the demographics of the gifted program relative to students, teachers, and other personnel who can serve as mentors, role models, and advocates. Empowering gifted African American students requires having comprehensive support services in place—supportive peer groups, school counselors, psychologists, and other school personnel who are trained to work with both gifted and minority students, and who are sensitive to the issues that attend being both gifted and a racial minority. Empowering and, thus, retaining African American youth in programs for the gifted also necessitates encouraging substantive family involvement, welcoming parents and significant others (e.g., particularly extended family members) into the formal learning process at all grade levels.

Our efforts to identify and place African American students in gifted programs (i.e., recruitment) have increased in recent years. However, more concerted efforts must be aimed at the retention of these students once placed. In this way, we ensure that gifted African American students receive the education to which they are entitled.

Guidelines

Guideline 1: A culture of assessment rather than a culture of testing promises to capture the strengths of gifted African American students.

Research support: Testing provides quantitative information on students (e.g., IQ score, achievement level), while assessment describes students' areas of strengths and shortcomings. Assessment is diagnostic, prescriptive, and proactive; it allows educators to develop a more comprehensive profile of the abilities and needs of gifted African American students.

Guideline 2: There is no "one size fits all" intelligence or achievement test. Multidimensional identification and assessment practices offer the greatest promise for recruiting African American students into gifted programs.

Research support: The (over)reliance on unidimensional tests for identifying gifted African American students has proven ineffective. Multidimensional assessment examines such factors as learning styles, test anxiety, and motivation; multimodal assessment examines students' particular area(s) of giftedness (e.g., creativity, intellectual, psychomotor, social) using various assessments such as students' products, portfolios, and autobiographies. The combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment practices provides a comprehensive profile of giftedness among African American students.

Guideline 3: Identification instruments must be valid, reliable, and culturally sensitive. If any of these variables are low or missing, the instrument should not be adopted for use with African American and other minority students.

Research support: African American students tend not to score well on standardized tests that are normed on middle-class White students. Further, standardized tests often lack cultural sensitivity relative to African American students' learning styles, values, and experience. Thus, they are biased against racially and culturally diverse students. As a result, standardized tests often provide little if any diagnostic and prescriptive information for educators.

Guideline 4: To increase the representation of African American students in gifted programs, educators must adopt contemporary definitions and theories of giftedness.

Research support: Howard Gardner, Joseph Renzulli, and Robert Sternberg have proposed culturally sensitive theories of giftedness. These definitions are inclusive because they support the notion of talent development, they acknowledge that giftedness is context-dependent and multifaceted, and they avoid the exclusive use of unidimensional tests and related identification practices.

Guideline 5: Comprehensive services must be provided if the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education is to be successful.

Research support: To increase the sense of belonging and ownership of African American students in gifted programs, educators must address their academic as well as psychological, social, and emotional needs. Gifted African American students who feel isolated, alienated, and misunderstood by teachers and peers are less likely to persist in gifted education programs than students who feel empowered. Services should focus on counseling needs, including academic counseling and vocational guidance. Options for individual, peer, and small group counseling should also be available to facilitate guidance experiences.

Guideline 6: Teachers who are trained in both gifted education and multicultural education increase their effectiveness in identifying and serving gifted African American students.

Research support: Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel can increase their effectiveness with gifted African American students if they have substantive preparation in multicultural education and counseling. This training increases their sensitivity, understanding, and respect for individual differences among students. Such training can also increase their ability to identify and serve gifted African American students. Ultimately, experienced teachers are more likely to ensure that a philosophy of pluralism permeates gifted education programs.

Guideline 7: To prevent underachievement, gifted students must be identified and served early.

Research support: Underachievement among African American students often begins in grades 3 and 4—the time at which gifted programs often begin. Without early identification and services, promising and capable African American students will have diminished opportunities for being identified or referred for assessment in later years.

Guideline 8: Qualitative definitions of underachievement offer more promise than quantitative definitions in describing poor achievement among gifted African American students.

Research support: Quantitative definitions of underachievement rely exclusively on high test scores. Gifted students who suffer from test anxiety, who confront test bias, who have learning style differences, and who have poor motivation are unlikely to receive high test scores. Qualitative definitions take into consideration motivation, self-concept, self-esteem, learning styles, and other factors not examined on traditional, standardized intelligence and achievement tests.

Guideline 9: The representation of African American students in gifted programs must be examined relative to both recruitment and retention issues.

Research support: Much of our effort concerning the representation of African American students in gifted education has focused on the recruitment component—identification and placement. Considerations regarding retention must be addressed as well. After successfully identifying and placing gifted African American students, educators must focus on such variables as school climate, the demographics of faculty and students, school personnel preparation in gifted and multicultural education, curriculum and instruction, and program evaluation.

Guideline 10: Family involvement is critical to the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education. Parents and extended family members must be involved early, consistently, and substantively in the recruitment and retention process.

Research support: Parents are effective and reliable sources of identification for gifted children. Parents and extended members (e.g., grandparents, aunts) can provide invaluable information on the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted African American students. Information on development, health, interests, extracurricular activities, learning styles, peer relations, and identity issues can only be provided by family members in many instances.

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The Recruitment and Retention of African American Students in Gifted Education Programs: Implications and Recommendations

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Introduction

The underrepresentation of African American students in gifted programs and services (self-contained classes, pull-out programs, etc.) is a major concern in the field of gifted education. Between 1976 and 1986, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) reported the persistent and severe underrepresentation of African American and other minority[1] students in programs for the gifted. In those same reports, the USDE found that African Americans and other minority students were over-represented in emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, and other special education programs. More recent data indicate that little has changed since 1976—their underrepresentation continues by 50% nationally, and is even greater in some school districts (Alamprese & Erlanger, 1988; Richert, 1987).

The U.S. Department of Education (1993), referring to the National Educational Longitudinal Studies data, reported that only 9% of gifted and talented students nationally were selected from the lowest income bracket, compared to 47% who were drawn from the upper income bracket. Thus, not only are minority students underrepresented in gifted programs, so too are economically challenged children.

In 1991, Harris and Ford reviewed the amount of literature on gifted African American students. Their search led to two discoveries. First, less than 2% of the articles and scholarly publications focused attention on gifted minority learners in general, and even fewer focused specifically on African American students (the largest U.S. minority population). Second, the vast majority of that literature and research focused almost exclusively on the identification of African American students for placement in gifted programs, neglecting the retention of these students once placed.

This paper begins by exploring barriers to the recruitment and retention of African American students in programs for gifted learners. This discussion is followed by recommendations relative to identification and placement. Finally, recommendations for the retention of gifted African American youth are discussed. It is contended that too little attention is paid to both the recruitment *and* retention of these students; it is also proposed that this underrepresentation may be a function of the combined effects of recruitment and retention issues. In essence, after gifted African American students have been identified and placed (i.e., recruited), what support services are available to secure their success and continuation in the program (i.e., retention)? This paper includes practical implications and sets forth research challenges incident to the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education programs and services.

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[1] The term "minority" is used here merely for convenience to depict students of African American, Native American, and Hispanic American ethnicity. As used here, the author is referring to visible minority groups or people of color. The term does not suggest inferiority among the aforementioned groups.

Recruitment Issues—Barriers to Identification and Placement

Recommendations regarding the identification and placement of gifted students vary, with an emphasis on the need to find alternative ways—more reliable and more valid methods and procedures—to identify gifted African American students. As will be discussed later, these alternatives include focusing on non-biased, non-traditional, multidimensional, and multimodal assessment strategies, using culturally sensitive instruments, and broadening our definitions and theories of giftedness to include those espoused by theorists Howard Gardner, Robert Sternberg, and Joseph Renzulli, as well as other researchers and practitioners.

Despite these initiatives and efforts, too little has changed in actual practice. For instance, a study by VanTassel Baska, Patton, and Prillaman (1989) revealed that almost 90% of states rely primarily on standardized, norm-referenced tests to identify gifted students, including those from economically and racially diverse groups. Accordingly, not much has changed in terms of percentages—African American and other minority students (with the exception of Asian Americans) continue to be an anomaly in gifted programs.

The following sections present an overview of critical obstacles to the recruitment and retention of African American students: (1) traditional IQ-based definitions and theories of giftedness; (2) inadequate identification practices; (3) inadequate attention to learning style preferences; (4) a lack of substantive training in multicultural education among teachers of the gifted; (5) lack of substantive preparation among teachers to work with gifted students; (6) too little focus on non-intellectual factors (affective, social, psychological, and cultural) that impede achievement; (7) quantitative-based definitions of underachievement; and (8) a lack of meaningful parent and family involvement. In many instances, the same issues that hinder the identification and placement of African American students in gifted programs inhibit their retention in such programs once placed.

Traditional IQ-Based Definitions and Theories of Giftedness

Definitions of giftedness abound, leaving little consensus regarding how best to define the term for African American and other minority students (Ford & Harris, 1994a; Harris & Ford, 1991). According to Gardner (1983, 1987), Sternberg (1985), and Cassidy and Hossler (1992), most states continue to follow a 1978 (or older) definition of gifted, which described gifted students as those who possess demonstrated or potential ability intellectually, creatively, in specific academic areas, performing and visual arts, and leadership. This definition succeeds an earlier one (Marland, 1972), which included psychomotor ability as a category, and the 1988 definition excludes specific mention of the performing arts. The most recent federal definition of gifted (USDE, 1993) offers greater promise, including increased attention to equity in terms of identifying gifted African American and other minority children:

> Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capacity in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, and unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (p. 26)

Cassidy and Hossler (1992) found that most states use either the 1978 federal definition outright or a modification of it, and no states reflected the more contemporary definitions advanced by Sternberg and Gardner (p. 53). They go on to say that 30 states had made no definitional revisions in at least a decade, and only 15 had made revisions in the last five years.

The most encouraging aspect of the 1978 federal definition is, of course, its inclusion of the "potentially" gifted. It appears to recognize a need to serve those students who have, for various reasons, yet to manifest their gifts—that is, students who might otherwise go unrecognized. These students tend to include underachievers, minority students, economically challenged students, learning and behavioral disordered students, and physically disabled/challenged students.

Feldhusen (1994) noted that the 1993 federal definition moves beyond a monolithic academic definition so long embraced. It also recognizes a broad range of ability and, for the first time, specifically mentions that no racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group has a monopoly on giftedness. However, educators must be mindful that, historically, states adopting the federal definition have focused on students who display gifts in the intellectual and specific academic ability areas, as opposed to those whose strengths reside in creative, visual and performing arts, leadership, and other areas.

Inadequate Identification Practices

Two of the most frequent methods for identifying gifted learners are (a) standardized, norm-referenced intelligence or achievement tests and (b) teacher nominations and recommendations.

Standardized, Norm-Referenced Practices

Almost a decade ago, Cox, Daniel, and Boston (1985) reported that teacher nominations were most often used for identification (91%), followed closely by achievement tests (90%) and IQ tests (82%). More recently, Archambault et al. (1993) surveyed over 3000 third- and fourth-grade teachers regarding identification practices. Results indicated that most of the public school teachers used achievement tests (79%), followed closely by IQ tests (72%), and teacher nomination (70%). Whereas the percentages or rankings appear to have changed over the years, the three primary identification sources remain the same.

Intellectual and specific academic abilities are most often assessed with standardized, norm-referenced tests, many of which carry biases in favor of middle-class White students who tend to have both quantitatively and qualitatively different experiences and learning opportunities than minority and economically challenged youth. Biases can result due to the following: (a) language differences; (b) the test questions are centered on experiences and facts of middle-class White students; (c) the answers that support middle-class values are often rewarded with more points; (d) the test favors verbal students; and (e) the test does not consider the influence of non-intellectual factors on achievement (e.g., motivation, self-concept of ability, test anxiety, task relevance).

Moreover, the educational needs of many gifted students will go unmet if states continue to define giftedness from a unidimensional perspective—that is, as a function of high IQ scores. As Gubbins, Siegle, Renzulli, and Brown (1993) noted, "for decades, the metric of giftedness has been test scores, more specifically, IQ scores" (p. 3). They and other scholars have noted that such unidimensional assessments identify only some students as gifted and miss the rest.

Given the numerous reasons to find more comprehensive and equitable identification strategies and instruments, Gubbins et al. (1993) conducted a study about educators' assumptions underlying the identification of gifted and talented students. More than 3000 educators from 47 states responded to a survey distributed at the 1992 National Association of Gifted Children conference. Respondents also included Consultant Bank members of The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented. There were five major findings. First, results indicated that educators disagreed that identification should be based on *restricted* identification practices (i.e., based on achievement and IQ tests, precise cut-off scores, restricted percentage, services for identified students only, and without teacher judgement/subjective criteria). Teachers of the gifted were more likely to disagree than were teachers in regular classrooms. Secondly, both educators of the gifted and those in the regular classroom agreed that identification practices should be *responsive and sensitive* to students' ability to express talents and gifts through various measures or observations (e.g., case studies, student-selected tasks, multiple formats, and such non-intellectual factors as creativity and leadership).

A third finding was that educators in both settings tended to agree that *on-going assessment* was important in the identification process. They agreed that regular, periodic reviews, alternative identification criteria, judgement by qualified persons, and programming informed by identification information were essential factors in designing and implementing an effective and a flexible identification system. Fourth, educators agreed that *multiple criteria* were important in the decision-making process. The respondents acknowledged that students express their abilities in diverse ways, that development can affect the expression of abilities, and that multiple types and sources of information should be gathered for an effective identification plan. Finally, teachers of the gifted agreed more strongly than other teachers that students' *cultural, experiential, and environmental backgrounds* provide important data on students' performance and, thus, the identification process. They acknowledged that locally developed methods and criteria should be used, and that services and activities should be informed by context-bound information.

Given the findings by Archambault et al. (1993), Cox, Daniel, and Boston (1985), Alvino, McDonnel, and Richert (1981), and Gubbins et al. (1993), it appears that the beliefs of educators about equitable and best practices are not always in accord with actual practices. Specifically, in theory, educators acknowledge the need to move away from restricted, narrow, test-driven identification practices to more inclusive and comprehensive practices based on multiple criteria and measurements; in actual practice, this seldom occurs.

Identification by Teachers

The practice of using teachers as primary identifiers of gifted learners carries numerous implications for the recruitment and identification of gifted African American students, particularly as many teachers are not substantively trained in gifted education and multicultural education (Banks, 1988; Banks & Banks, 1988). This lack of training decreases, two-fold, the probability that gifted African American students will be identified and placed.

Tuttle, Becker, and Sousa (1988) noted that the most prevalent method of identifying gifted learners is to ask for teacher recommendations, a method they found to be inadequate. Early research by Pegnato and Birch (1959) found that junior high school teachers not only failed to nominate over 50% of the gifted students in their school, but they also identified many average students as gifted. Jacobs (1971) found that primary teachers surveyed could identify only 10% of the students who had scored high on individual IQ tests. Cox, Daniel, and Boston (1985) found that almost 38% of the teachers in the Public School Sample of the Richardson study reported unidentified gifted students in their third- and fourth-grade classrooms, the grades at which gifted programs tend to begin. Data indicated that teachers frequently emphasize such behaviors as cooperation, answering correctly, punctuality, and neatness when identifying gifted students. But these may not be the behaviors gifted learners demonstrate (particularly, racially and culturally diverse students, underachievers, and males).

Identification by Counselors and School Psychologists

School counselors and psychologists are also heavily relied upon for identification and placement decisions. Several studies have explored public school counselors' awareness of issues confronting gifted students, as well as their training to work with this student population. Findings indicate that few school counselors or psychologists are formally trained to work with gifted learners. For example, Klausmeier, Mishra, and Maker (1987) found that most school counselors considered their training in recognizing gifted students to be less than average, and their training with minorities and low socioeconomic groups to be below average or completely lacking. At the university level, Ford and Harris (1994b, in press) found that only 10% of counselors reported training to work with gifted learners, while 71% reported some training in multicultural issues. The findings also indicated that the majority of the counselors were unaware of or indecisive about the issues hindering the achievement of gifted African American and gifted White students.

In their recent study of state certification endorsement for school counselors in special education, Frantz and Prillaman (1993) found that 11 states required at least one course in special education for their certification as school counselors, 17 were in the process of changing certification requirements for counselors and considering including a course in special education, and another 17 states neither required any courses nor were they in the process of considering changes in certification.

Too Little Attention to Students' Learning Style Preferences

Research and attention to individual differences in students is well-established in education. Historically, however, the focus has been on intelligence, attitudes, and motivation. More recently, educators have devoted attention to learning styles. Sternberg (1990), for example, has argued that students' learning styles are as educationally valuable and informative as level of ability; thus, styles are keys to understanding student performance. He maintained that styles are propensities rather than abilities, that they are ways of directing the intellect that an individual finds comfortable, and they represent the various ways children prefer to use their intellect.

Learning styles has been defined by Dunn and Dunn (1992a, 1992b) as the way individuals concentrate on, absorb, and remember new and difficult information. McCarthy (1990) defined learning styles as approaches to cognitive, affective, and psychological factors that function as relatively stable indicators of how one concentrates on, perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. Keefe (1979) also views learning styles along affective and psychological domains. These researchers argue that students' learning styles demand an eclectic approach to curriculum and instruction; this approach accommodates individual differences in learning by using multiple approaches, models, and strategies—concrete and abstract, whole-to-part and part-to-whole, visual and auditory, hands on—that reflect the diverse ways students' acquire knowledge.

Several researchers have found differences in learning styles between African American and White students (e.g., Dunn & Dunn, 1992a, 1992b; Dunn, Gemake, Jalali, & Zenhausern, 1989; Dunn, et al. 1990; Hale-Benson, 1986; Hilliard, 1992). African American students, for example, are often global, relational, visual learners who have high mobility, tactile, and kinesthetic needs and preferences (Saracho & Gerstl, 1992). Torrance's (1977, 1978, 1989) characteristics of gifted culturally diverse groups acknowledged how these differences are strengths that can be used to identify and nurture their gifts and talents. These differences and characteristics have numerous implications for the identification of gifted African American students. The extent to which African American students are global versus analytic learners, visual versus auditory, highly mobile versus less mobile, and less peer-oriented versus more peer-oriented will affect their learning, achievement, motivation, and school performance. Accordingly, it may also inhibit their identification, placement, and retention in gifted programs. Because African American youth tend to be global and visual learners, they may not be identified by teachers and assessed adequately by standardized tests, which do not tap into these skills.

In a seminal study, Goodlad (1984) examined the practices of teachers in more than 1000 elementary and secondary schools. Goodlad (and colleagues) reported that the "modus operandi" of the typical classroom is still didactic, practice, and little else (Sirotnik, 1983, p. 17). Specifically, almost 70% of the total class time involved verbal interaction, with teachers out-talking students by a ratio of three to one. Barely 5% of instructional time was spent on direct questioning, and less than one percent of that time was devoted to open-ended questions. In addition, over 95% of classroom affect was neutral, and the majority of student participation in the learning process was passive. Most instruction was total class (67 to 75%), less than 5% of students worked independently, and less than 10% worked in small group or cooperative situations. While the data are not reported specifically relative to either gifted or minority students, it seems reasonable to assume that these students were represented in the study. Given this assumption, it also seems safe to conclude that the learning style preferences of many gifted African American students went unmet, and that there was a conflict between teaching styles and learning styles.

Lack of Substantive Training in Multicultural Education for Teachers of the Gifted

Multicultural education represents one way to address learning styles differences, as well as other academic and affective issues among gifted African American students. Goodwin (1994) studied the perceptions of preservice teachers about multicultural education. Almost half of the respondents were people of color (41%). Results indicated that little consensus existed among the prospective teachers regarding the aims of multicultural education. The interpretation of multicultural education ranged from the most cursory to the most in-depth, from the most superficial to the most meaningful (p. 127), and most of the respondents held narrow views of multicultural education that centered on visible minorities. Overall, Goodwin found that the future teachers failed to address and deal with the substantive, structural inequities inherent in society. The teachers also defined multicultural education in ways that resembled an "ethnic additive" (Banks, 1988), which is a strategy for appending culturally relevant material and content to the regular curriculum. Ethnic attitudes include:

> . . . policies and school practices that require no fundamental changes in the views, assumptions, and instructional practices of teachers and administrators. The emphasis is usually on the life-styles of ethnic groups rather than on reform of social and political systems so that the opportunities and life-chances of poor and minority students can be substantively improved. (p. 99)

It should be noted that a lack of understanding of cultural differences among teachers applies across all racial and ethnic groups. It is erroneous to assume, for example, that African American teachers will automatically understand African American children. For instance, Goodwin (1994) found that all but one minority respondent reported no preparation in multicultural education beyond classroom discussions and isolated presentations. This finding included all of the African American teachers who had received undergraduate training from historically Black colleges. The heterogeneity within and between racial and ethnic groups in terms of socioeconomic status, religion, acculturation, and cultural orientations, for example, reinforces the need to avoid adopting the "minorities-automatically-understand-minorities" assumption. It reinforces the need for all teachers to be substantively prepared to work with students who represent the demographic realities of life and schools.

Lack of Substantive Preparation Among Teachers in Gifted Education

While many schools have programs or services in place to help meet the needs of gifted students, an alarmingly few states require certification and/or endorsement in gifted education in order for teachers to work with formally identified students. The reality is that most gifted students are taught by teachers who lack the expertise or preparation to work with these students. Morris (1989) indicated that the majority of gifted students find the regular classroom the primary center for their education. Archambault et al. and others (for example, the Council of State Directors, 1987; Cox, et al. 1985) reported that the large majority of gifted students spend all but two to three hours of their typical school week in the regular classroom.

Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, and Salvin (1993) stated that the greatest problem gifted students face is the lack of challenge they find in the curriculum. Even when a gifted program exists in a school, teachers do not always provide differentiated experiences for gifted learners in the regular classroom. Westberg et al. concluded that specific knowledge of how to meet the needs of gifted students should be provided to classroom teachers. Solano (1976) found that unless a teacher had some experience with gifted students, or courses in teaching the gifted, the teacher would probably hold a stereotypical or idealistic image of the gifted, an image that could inhibit the identification and placement of gifted students in general and gifted African American students in particular.

Too Little Attention to Psychosocial and Cultural Barriers

Gifted African American students share many of the social and emotional concerns of gifted learners in general—peer pressures, poor peer relationships, perfectionism, heightened sensitivity and awareness of societal problems, excessive expectations from significant others, and confusion about the values of their gifts (Galbraith, 1985; Roeper, 1982). However, these concerns may escalate among gifted African American students who face additional barriers to achievement. The academic success and retention of African American students may be influenced more by the person-environment transactions and related sociocultural influences than by intellectual and academic factors (Prillerman, Myers, & Smedley, 1989). Such factors as a positive self-concept, existence of support systems (Baldwin, 1989), and on understanding of racism (Maker, 1989) may be more predictive of African American success and retention than academic ability (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1985). Hence, non-intellectual, psychosocial, and contextual factors (e.g., self-concept, ethnic ideology, relationship with teachers and counselors, feelings, experiences of discrimination, and peer relationships) are some of the strongest predictors of negative outcomes for African American students (Nottingham, Rosen, & Parks, 1992). Stated differently, gifted African American students are negotiating several uphill battles, as described below.

Environmental Factors

Given the many roles and responsibilities educators must adopt, it is easy to forget that many of our young people are not enjoying a loving and supportive home, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, good food, adequate physical and mental health care, freedom from others' prejudices, and the other conditions children need to become productive members of society (Thompson & Rudolph, 1992). To ignore any student's background and experiences is to ignore valuable and important information for learning and counseling.

Several demographic variables have been associated or highly correlated with poor achievement—poverty, minority status, living in a single-parent home, poorly educated mother, and English as a second language. Almost half of African American children live in one or two risk categories: 43% live in poverty and 67% in single-parent homes; and the unemployment rate for African American males is 32% (Waxman, 1992). These risk factors take their toll, as reflected in the fact that African American students drop out at a 40% rate higher than White students (Garcia & Walker de Felix, 1992). Logically and statistically, gifted African American students must be present in situations and environments that place them at risk for underachieving, exhibiting low motivation, dropping out, and otherwise not reaching their potential as students and adults.

While definitions of what it means to be "at risk" vary, there is consensus that many children lack the home and community resources to benefit fully from schooling. Because of poverty, cultural obstacles, and linguistic differences, for example, many African American children have low academic achievement and high dropout rates (U.S. Department of Education, 1988). Poverty inhibits potential. Together or in isolation, poverty and other risk factors can sabotage any student's achievement and motivation. They threaten, in particular, to undermine the school achievement and motivation of African American and other minority children who are disproportionately represented in at-risk conditions (Garcia & Walker de Felix, 1992; Levin, 1990; Walker de Felix, 1992). In essence, for some gifted African American students, survival may take precedence over school achievement.

Social Factors

There are numerous social injustices or inequities that contribute to (or worsen) school achievement for African American students. Discrimination based on socioeconomic status, race, and gender are inherent in schools and society (Howard & Hammond, 1985; Pedersen & Carey, 1994). Tensions on school campuses serve to highlight the racial disharmony and other intolerances felt at a societal level.

Low teacher expectations for African American students are also an unfortunate reality in schools and, by extension, gifted programs. Ford (1991) found that while many of the gifted African American students surveyed reported low levels of effort in school, they believed they could achieve at higher levels than their grades reflected. They also reported, however, that teachers perceived them as working to their potential. In essence, gifted African American students are not immune from social injustices, whatever form they take.

Cultural Factors

The topic of cultural differences has had a significant impact on current research and practice, with data pointing to an ever increasing cultural gap between teachers and students. In many schools, a model of "cultural difference" has been used to account for the difficulties some minority students experience in educational settings (Eisenhart, 1989; Gay, 1990; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ogbu, 1988). According to such a model, cultural patterns (ways of behaving, perceiving and thinking) differ both between and within racial and ethnic groups. Cultural styles and orientations are viewed as patterns learned at an early age, as one grows up in a given family and community context (Eisenhart, 1989). As individuals move out of the context of this primary socialization, they respond to new situations with previously learned behaviors and styles. When individuals encounter cultural patterns that are different in the new situation, they may have difficulty making a cultural transition. For gifted African American students, this new situation may include being placed in a gifted program (Baldwin, 1989) where teachers and school personnel may not understand their cultural styles and orientations. It is hypothesized that the less congruence between the home and school, the more difficult the cultural transition and the more negative will be students' educational outcomes (e.g., Abi-Nader, 1990; Eisenhart, 1989; Neira, 1988; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987).

Patton and Sims (1993) identified three components of an African American philosophical system that promises to guide theory relative to developing constructs of intelligence and giftedness, as well as assessment practices. Patton and Sims contend that three orientations (metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology) reflect historical and classical African-oriented world views and ethos that lay the foundation for cultural themes among many African American students. *Metaphysics* concerns an individual's holistic view of reality and tendency to engage in synthetical and contextual thinking. Thus, emphasis is placed on viewing the whole (the forest) and then understanding the interconnectedness of parts (the trees). Other scholars have referred to this style of perceiving, thinking, and understanding as field-dependent, relational, and global. *Axiology* concerns an individual's preference for person-to-person interactions and developing strong social bonds. Hale-Benson (1986) and Fordham (1988) refer to this phenomenon as "fictive kinship." This preference is also seen in large, extended families that are common among African Americans and other children of color (Anderson & Allen, 1984; Ford, Harris, Turner, & Sandidge, 1991; McAdoo, 1988). This need for social interaction and bonding may also suggest a preference for group work, cooperative learning, and other social learning experiences. *Epistemology* represents the individual's emphasis on emotions and feelings, as well as their sensitivity to emotional cues (Patton & Sims, 1993). This preference is also evident in interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1983, 1987). Children here may have an especially strong need for a supportive and nurturing classroom environment.

Boykin (1994) also examined the cultural styles of African Americans. While he did not focus specifically on *gifted* African American youth, it is only reasonable to conclude that they, too, may have adopted such cultural styles:

(a) **Spirituality**: An approach to life that is vitalistic rather than mechanistic, with the conviction that non-material, religious forces influence people's everyday lives; connotes an acceptance of a non-material higher force that pervades all of life's affairs;

(b) **Harmony**: The notion that one's fate is interrelated with other elements in the scheme of things, so that humankind and nature are harmonically conjoined; implies that one's functioning is inextricably linked to nature's order and one should be synchronized with this order;

(c) **Movement**: An emphasis on the interweaving of movement, rhythm, music, and dance, which are considered central to psychological health; connotes a premium placed on the interwoven amalgamation of movement, (poly)rhythm, dance, and percussion embodied in the musical beat;

(d) **Verve**: A propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation, to action that is energetic and lively; connotes a particular receptiveness to relatively high levels of sensate (i.e., intensity and variability of) stimulation;

(e) **Affect**: An emphasis on emotions and feelings, together with a special sensitivity to emotional cues and a tendency to be emotionally responsive; implies the centrality of affective information and emotional expressiveness and the equal and integrated importance of thoughts and feelings;

(f) **Communalism**: A commitment to social connectedness that includes an awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privileges; implies a commitment to the fundamental interdependence of people and to the importance of social bonds, relationships, and the transcendence of the group;

(g) **Oral Tradition**: A preference for oral modes of communication in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances. Oral virtuosity—the ability to use metaphorically colorful, graphic forms of spoken language—is emphasized and cultivated; connotes the centrality of oral/aural modes of communication for conveying full meaning and the cultivation of speaking as performance;

(h) **Expressive Individualism**: The cultivation of a distinctive personality and a proclivity for spontaneity, and genuine personal expression; denotes the uniqueness of personal expression, personal style; and

(i) **Social Time Perspective**: An orientation to time that is treated as passing through a social space in which time is recurring, personal, and phenomenological; denotes a commitment to a social construction of time as personified by an event orientation (Boykin, 1994, pp. 127-128).

Educators of the gifted who are familiar with and sensitive to cultural themes, differences, and strengths both across and within cultural groups should be more effective in working with African American students. There is a critical need to decrease the potential cultural gap between teachers and students, and to deliver excellent and equitable services to children who probably do not live in the same neighborhoods or share the same cultural values and beliefs as teachers.

Peer Pressures

Olszewski-Kubilius and Scott (1992) maintained that economically challenged minority children may be pressured by their non-gifted peers not to do well academically. Fordham (1988) found that African American adolescents who achieve well in school risk being accused of "acting white." When one adds race to the issues confronting gifted learners, the complex problems confronting gifted minority students are two-fold. To some of these children, outstanding school achievement is perceived as "the man's" game (Passow, 1972, p. 28)—a game that is unworthy of pursuing by poor and/or minority learners. This anti-achievement message is often an effort to maintain cultural identity and to avoid social isolation (Ford, D. Y., 1992; Ford, Harris, Webb, & Jones, 1994; Fordham, 1988). Such students, for instance, may become class clowns to camouflage their intellectual and academic abilities. Ford (1991) found that most African American students surveyed agreed that "class clowns are really smart." Thus, peer pressure can be a primary and potent influence on the school performance and motivation of African American youth.

Over-Reliance on Quantitative Definitions of Underachievement Among Gifted Students

While the term "gifted underachiever" may appear to be an oxymoron, gifted students represent a large percentage of high school dropouts. Estimates are that from 10 to 20% of high school dropouts are gifted (Davis & Rimm, 1989; Lajoie & Shore, 1981; Rumberger, 1987; Whitmore, 1986). In addition, at least half of all gifted students may be underachievers (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and depending upon one's definition of gifted and underachievement, the percentages may be even higher (Ford, D. Y., 1991, 1992).

Education is plagued with numerous definitions of underachievement, with most reflecting a discrepancy between some standardized measure and actual school performance. At least four issues pose problems for gifted African American students, especially when the definitions are heavily loaded psychometrically. First, the psychometric or quantitative nature of these definitions ignores the importance of behavioral aspects of underachievement; underachievement is seldom defined as a function of effort and motivation, even though psychologists often focus on motivation, effort, and perceptions when examining achievement (or lack thereof) (Ames & Archer, 1988; Maehr, 1984; Nicholls, 1984).

Second, the psychometric definitions assume that only students who score high on standardized intelligence, ability, or achievement tests, and perform lower than expected in school (achieving, for example, low grades) are underachievers. By implication, these definitions ignore the reality that many capable learners do not perform optimally on standardized instruments. Davis and Rimm (1989) contended that

> Despite all the faults and problems related to testing, despite test unreliability and measurement error, and despite all the biases that need to be considered related to low test scores, it seems apparent that children cannot score high on tests purely by accident. (p. 304)

Nonetheless, gifted students, and especially African American children, do score poorly because of these defects. What happens to the gifted African American student who scores low on such tests, but is fully capable of performing well in gifted education programs? Just as tests may be invalid and unreliable indices of achievement for some students, they may be invalid and unreliable indices of underachievement.

Third, the various definitions make it difficult to determine whether educators should assess underachievement by comparing: (1) IQ test scores with grades; (2) IQ test scores with ability test scores; (3) achievement test scores with grades; (4) achievement test scores with ability test scores; (5) ability test scores with grades; or (6) any combination of the preceding five. Finally, identified characteristics of underachievement are usually established on White middle-class students. African American children who do not necessarily manifest achievement in the same way as White students may go unidentified as gifted, as underachieving, or as both.

Lack of Parent and Family Involvement in the Formal Educational Process

African American parents face several barriers to educational involvement on behalf of their children. As Marion (1979, 1980, 1981) noted, many African American parents express concerns that teachers and schools fail to acknowledge giftedness within the minority student population and the strengths these students bring to school. Parents of less affluent economic backgrounds, living in different family structures, and/or with lower educational levels, may be apprehensive of school personnel, namely those who hold stereotypical views of persons in these circumstances.

African American families have numerous strengths, including strong kinship bonds, strong work orientations, adaptability of family roles, high achievement orientations, and strong religious affiliations that may be overlooked by school personnel (Ford, 1993b; Ford, Harris, Turner, & Sandidge, 1991; McAdoo, 1988). Accordingly, African American parents may distrust school personnel, and view gifted programs with apprehension and suspicion.

Given the aforementioned issues, the following recommendations are offered to help ensure the successful recruitment *and* retention of African American students in programs and services for gifted students.

Recommendations for Recruitment

When African American students enter gifted programs, they may need to make significant personal, family, and social adjustments, particularly if they come from programs in which they were the majority. Successful recruitment requires attention to identification and placement issues, as described below.

Identification Considerations

Several issues must be considered to ensure that the identification and assessment process is equitable. These considerations include: the program's philosophy regarding identification and assessment, the definitions and theories of giftedness adopted, the validity and reliability of instruments chosen, attention to cultural diversity in giftedness, attention to non-cognitive factors in assessment, multidimensional and multimodal assessment practices, and qualitative definitions of underachievement.

Identification Versus Assessment

Testing is big business in American education, with estimates that some 127 million standardized tests are given each year, averaging about three tests per student (Educational Testing Service, 1990). Given the magnitude of testing, educators must be ever mindful of the important distinctions between identification and assessment. The purpose of identification is not a mere categorization of gifted abilities already fully manifest. Identification is actually a needs assessment for the purpose of placing students into educational programs designed to develop their latent potential (Colangelo & Davis, 1991). Thus, identification is designed to confirm one's perception that a child needs special services (is gifted, etc.), while assessment is designed to give more specific information on the areas in which the child is gifted, as well as their strengths and shortcomings.

According to Welch (1994, under review), a culture of assessment conveys expectations about what is important for students to learn, provides information to students and parents about the students' progress, and helps guide and improve instruction. Because of its emphasis on multiple and diverse measures, assessment also provides information relative to accountability, guides policy decisions about school improvement and reform, and provides information for program evaluation.

Teachers of the gifted are encouraged to examine their evaluation practices and self-constructed tests relative to shortcomings. Such tests, according to Fleming and Chambers

(1983), are most often short-answer and matching, but may also include true-false and multiple choice items. Dorr-Bremm and Herman (1986) found that although teachers may use tests to report results to parents, to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, to group and place students, to assign grades, and to plan instruction, they are more likely to use their own opinions when judging student performance.

Despite the widespread use of teacher-made tests, little data regarding quality exist. Carter (1984) and Gullickson and Ellwein (1985) reported that, too often, items are ambiguous and tests place a heavy emphasis on simple recall of facts and information. Further, the tests are often too short to produce reliable scores, and teachers seldom conduct item analyses to improve the tests.

In ideal situations, assessment reflects the goals of the gifted program and activities, mirrors the philosophy of the program, and actively involves students in the process. Assessment should not reduce student motivation or be used to filter out minority and low SES students from the gifted program and services. And it should be conducted by well-trained personnel who understand not only the instruments and their intended purposes, but also their shortcomings. All of these variables affect the quality and outcome of assessment practices.

Valid and Reliable Instruments

There is no "one size fits all" intelligence or achievement test. Valid and reliable instruments must be utilized in the identification and assessment process. Other important considerations in selecting instruments are presented in Figure 1. As Hansen and Linden (1990) advised, one must consider the purpose of the instrument, the target population, special considerations, and limitations.

Moreover, nomination forms and checklists for parents must be sensitive to all reading, comprehension, and educational levels. For clarity purposes, characteristics of African American students should also contain examples and descriptors of the characteristics. Parents who are unable to understand the items on the checklist will have a difficult time responding accurately. These same considerations must be adopted for teacher nomination forms and checklists. We must make certain that both our formal and informal instruments are sensitive to parents and teachers. It would be informative if teachers and parents used the same or similar checklists so that the selection committee or decision makers can explore consistencies or discrepancies in the responses of parents and teachers. If discrepancies are significant, educators can examine the nature and extent of the differences.

Promising Theories and Definitions of Giftedness

While passé educational definitions and achievement tests virtually ignore this nation's changing demographics and increasing diversity, as well as individual and cultural differences among non-White students, at least two recent theories of intelligence and giftedness promise to capture the strengths and abilities of gifted African American learners. Sternberg's (1985) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence proposes that intelligence can be revealed in at least three ways: contextually, experientially, and componentially. Componential learners are analytical and abstract thinkers who do well on standardized tests and in school. Experiential learners value creativity and deal effectively with novelty. Contextual learners adapt to their environments (a skill not measured by IQ tests). They are street smart, survivors, socially competent and practical, but they may do poorly in school.

(I) Define the goals of the identification process:

1. List the major goals of the gifted program.
2. List the areas of giftedness to be served.

(II) Assess the relevance of the instrument:

1. What does this test/instrument purport to measure?
2. Is the test/instrument relevant to the intended purposes? (e.g., Does it measure behaviors listed in the goals of the identification process?)
3. Is the test/instrument relevant for the intended population and/or culturally and racially diverse students? (e.g., Are these students represented significantly among the norming population? Are cultural biases evident?)

(III) Technical components in selecting the instrument:

1. Is the instrument reliable?
    - a. What types of reliability coefficients are reported?
    - b. What are the reported reliability coefficients?

2. Is the instrument valid?
    - a. What types of validity evidence are presented?
    - b. What are the reported validity coefficients?

(IV) Use a variety of evaluation techniques:

What other evidence is available to measure the constructs or behaviors of interest, and their relevance for identification of gifted students?

(V) Practical consideration:

1. Is the test/instrument efficient in terms of:
    - a. scoring?
    - b. administrative time?
    - c. cost?
2. Is the test/instrument user friendly?

(VI) Assess the limitations of the test/instrument:

List the limitations of the test/instrument (e.g., relative to demographic variables, item format, test-taking format)

(VII) Interpretation of test results:

Is there someone on the staff who is knowledgeable about psychometrics? Is there someone who can appropriately interpret and use the test/instrument results?

Note: Adapted from Hansen and Linden (1990).

Figure 1. Checklist for Test and Instrument Selection.

Hatch and Gardner (1989) distinguished among seven types of intelligences (linguistical, logical-mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily kinesthetic, spatial, and musical), each of which entails distinct forms of perception, memory, and other psychological processes. Gardner's (1983, 1987) Theory of Multiple Intelligences defines intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings. Gardner argued that one should use fair intelligence tests that are based on culturally-valued activities when determining giftedness. Moreover, the assessments should take place within familiar contexts because performance inevitably depends on one's familiarity with the materials and demands of the assessment experience. These two theories favor the notion that gifted students must be identified and assessed within a contextual framework that considers students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and the quality and quantity of their formal learning opportunities. Adopting broader definitions will increase the likelihood of equitable identification practices that are inclusive rather than exclusive to both individual and groups of students.

Consideration of Cultural Diversity in the Manifestation of Giftedness

Gifted students from all cultures share certain characteristics of giftedness, including the ability to meaningfully manipulate some symbol system held valuable in their indigenous culture; the ability to think logically, given appropriate information; the ability to use stored knowledge to solve problems; the ability to reason by analogy; the ability to extrapolate knowledge to new or novel situations (Gallagher & Kinney, 1974).

In addition to these characteristics, gifted minority students learn quickly through experience, retain and use ideas and information well, are adept at generalizing learning to other areas, showing relationships among apparently unrelated parts, and solving problems in resourceful ways (Frasier, 1989). Other characteristics include persuasive language, language rich in imagery, humor rich with symbolism, creativity, social intelligence, psychosocial sensitivity (e.g., particularly to inequities), and sensitivity to movement and action (Horowitz & O'Brien, 1985). Torrance's (1977) list of creative positives captures many of the strengths gifted African American students bring into learning situations: ability to express feelings and emotions; ability to improvise with common materials; articulate in role playing and storytelling; enjoyment of and ability in music and rhythm, performing arts, creative movement, dance and dramatics; expressive speech; humor; expressiveness in body language, including responsiveness to kinesthetic experiences; responsiveness to the concrete; and problem centeredness.

The above mentioned characteristics serve as general guidelines from which to both understand and work effectively with gifted African American students. To truly understand the strengths of these students, it is necessary to get to know them as individuals.

Consideration of Non-Cognitive Factors in Assessment

For far too many students, tests are academic electric chairs. Such variables as test anxiety, particularly chronic test anxiety, can have debilitating effects on students' performance. When students are too nervous, too tense, and/or too worried about the test results, they cannot perform at even minimal levels on the tests. Similarly, fear of failure or success, poor self-confidence, a lack of motivation and persistence, a lack of commitment to the task (i.e., test itself), and preoccupation with other issues not germane to the test itself can negatively affect students' performance.

Educators are encouraged to observe students during test-taking situations, to look for undue stress and anxiety, and to follow-up by talking with gifted African American students about their concerns. By teaching students relaxation skills, time management test-taking skills, and study skills, as well as positive self-talk or affirmations, teachers and counselors can help gifted African American students to increase their comfort level, as well as test outcomes. It may also prove invaluable to provide students with alternative assessment tasks (e.g., written report, projects) from which teachers can evaluate learning and alternative study environments (e.g., group) to promote self-confidence.

Multidimensional and Multimodal Identification Practices

Numerous options exist for assessing African American and other minority students for placement in gifted programs, and the most promising of these practices rely on multidimensional and multimodal assessment strategies (Ford & Harris, 1991, 1994a; Harris & Ford, 1991; O'Tuel, 1994; Patton, 1992; Patton & Sims, 1993). Such unidimensional instruments as intelligence and achievement tests cannot reliably measure a multidimensional construct like intelligence, but multidimensional assessment can increase the reliability. These assessments take different forms; however, the essential components include both quantitative and qualitative assessment strategies, as presented in Figure 2. Using such strategies ensures that gifted programs and identification practices are inclusive rather than exclusive for potentially gifted students, underachievers, minority students, and other historically underrepresented groups.

As the figure suggests, quantitative identification instruments include both traditional and non-traditional instruments. The traditional tests include the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test—Revised, for example. Non-traditional, culturally sensitive instruments include the Coloured, Standard, and Advanced Progressive Matrices, the Matrix Analogies Test (expanded or short forms), the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, and the Torrance Tests for Creative Thinking. Assessment models that result in profiles of giftedness among historically underrepresented students include the Baldwin Identification Matrix, the Frasier Talent Assessment Profile, the Program of Assessment Diagnosis and Instruction, and the Potentially Gifted Minority Student Project (see Patton, 1992; Patton & Sims, 1993).

Qualitative identification strategies include portfolio assessments, reviews of students' transcripts, observational or performance-based assessments, nominations by parents, teachers, peers or students themselves, interviews, and biographical inventories. Portfolios and biographical inventories represent two of the most promising qualitative indices for identifying gifted African American students. Portfolios are a purposeful collection of student work and records amassed over time, and those who keep the portfolios collect a body of work that reflects the child's ability to produce, to perceive, and to reflect (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992). Portfolios can be written, behavioral, or oral, and composed of artwork, journals, biographies, writing samples, projects, a teacher's observations of student's free time use, audio or videotapes of class discussions, and samples from work outside of school—for example, hobbies, collections, instances of leadership or resolving conflicts, and family duties (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, pp. 75-76). Promising identification practices and educational programs are currently underway with many of the Javits' projects (e.g., Baldwin, 1994; Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat, 1993; Coleman, 1994; Kay & Subotnik, 1994; O'Tuel, 1994) and at The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at The University of Virginia, The University of Connecticut, The University of Georgia, and Yale University.

Instrument/Index

QUANTITATIVE

Traditional

Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children—Revised
Stanford Binet Intelligence Test
Otis-Lennon Mental Ability Test
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills
Peabody Individual Achievement Test—Revised

Non-Traditional

The Raven's Coloured, Standard, and Advanced Progressive Matrices
The Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children
The Matrix Analogies Test—expanded and short form
Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking
Torrance Creativity Tests for Children

QUALITATIVE

Portfolios and performance-based assessments (e.g., writing samples, artwork, audio or visual taping of classroom discussions, journals, projects)
Biographical inventories
Nominations forms and checklists (parents, teachers, peers, self)
Transcripts (e.g., explore strengths in certain subjects and areas, look for inconsistent performance)
Learning styles inventories
Motivational and attitudinal measures

Promising assessment instruments for developing profiles:

The Baldwin Identification Matrix
The Frasier Talent Assessment Profile
The Potentially Gifted Minority Student Project
The Program of Assessment Diagnosis and Instruction

Note: Adapted from Ford and Harris (1991); Patton (1992)

Figure 2. Sample Identification Instruments: A Multidimensional and Multimodal Framework.

Finally, and equally important, are assessments of motivation and test anxiety, which increase further our understanding of (a) the reasons gifted African American students may underachieve, (b) the reasons for students' poor test scores, and (c) the difficulties of identifying gifted African American students. The combination of qualitative and quantitative—multidimensional and multimodal—assessment practices accommodates multiple intelligences, while valuing gifted African American students' culture, values, customs, strengths, and potentials. This holistic and comprehensive approach also considers the interrelated effects of social, cultural, and individual variables on African American students' decision or desire to "drop out" of gifted programs and services.

Broader, Contextual-Based Definitions of Underachievement

Educators must use both quantitative and qualitative indices to more effectively identify and better understand underachievement. For instance, underachievement should be analyzed relative to social, psychological, and cultural issues and how they affect (inhibit or enhance) achievement (Ford & Harris, 1994a; Ford, Harris, & Schuerger, 1993; Ford, Winborne, & Harris, 1990). These factors include locus of control, fears and anxieties, self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, motivation, and effort (Figure 3). Tomlinson (1992) maintained that far too many African American children perform poorly in school, not because they lack basic intellectual capacities or specific learning skills, but because they have low expectations, feel helpless, blame others, or give up in the face of failure. Ford (1991) found that 80% of the gifted African American students surveyed reported exerting low levels of effort in school. The USDE (1993) also reported the pervasiveness of effortless achievement among gifted students nationally.

Teachers must also consider the influence of peer pressure on achievement and effort. Pressures from peers to forego achievement can undermine the academic success of bright African American students (Comer & Haynes, 1990; Ford, D. Y., 1992; Fordham, 1988; Haynes, Hamilton-Lee, & Comer, 1988; Torrance, 1977). The fear associated with losing friendships and being isolated from peers because of outstanding achievement can undermine the motivation and effort of gifted African American students (Ford, 1993a; Tomlinson, 1992; USDE, 1993). As Tomlinson reported,

> Peer pressure profoundly influences the academic behavior of students.... Typically, peer pressure motivates students to stay in school and graduate, but even as they frown on failure, peers also restrain high achievement.... Some student cultures actively reject academic aspirations. In this case, high grades can be a source of peer ridicule; and when effort is hostage to peer pressure, those high achievers who persist may face strong social sanctions. (p. 2)

Finally, exploring underachievement relative to social forces seems warranted, including: (a) the influences of overt discrimination and low teacher expectations; (b) psychological or affective issues, such as fears and anxieties; and (c) cultural barriers to achievement, such as home and community values that differ from values espoused in the schools by teachers and administrators. Because all students need to feel a sense of competence and social belonging, we must direct more attention to affective and social needs and issues.

Placement Considerations

In making placement decisions, educators should be mindful of the implications of service options, the demographic characteristics of students and faculty, family concerns, and students' academic status.

Social Factors:

____ Student's primary social group is outside of the school or gifted program
____ Student participates in little or no extracurricular activities
____ Student socializes with drug users or delinquents
____ Student's need for peer relationships outweighs his/her academic concerns about school and achievement
____ Student feels alienated and isolated from classmates and/or teacher

Family Factors:

____ Student has one parent in the home
____ Student has relatives who have dropped out of school
____ Student has little parental/family supervision
____ Parental expectations for student are too low or unrealistic
____ Communication between home and school is poor
____ Student's home life is stressful

School Factors/Climate:

____ Teachers and school personnel hold low expectations for minority students
____ Gifted program lacks cultural and racial diversity relative to students
____ Gifted program lacks cultural and racial diversity relative to teachers
____ Little attention is given to multicultural education
____ Teachers and other school personnel lack substantive training in gifted education
____ Teachers and other school personnel lack substantive training in multicultural education
____ Minority students are underrepresented in gifted program and activities

Personality/Individual Factors:

____ Student cannot tolerate structured and passive activities
____ Student relates poorly to authority or adult figures (e.g., teachers, parents, school administrators)
____ Student disrupts the classroom
____ Student has experienced emotional trauma (on more than one occasion, consistently, or frequently)
____ Student is unhealthy
____ Student has low self-esteem
____ Students has low academic and/or low social self-concepts
____ Student consistently seeks immediate gratification
____ Student's learning style preferences are inconsistent with teaching styles

Note: Adapted from McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (1993).

Figure 3. Initial Checklist for Identifying Potential "Underachievers" From Gifted Programs.

Service Options

The services offered to gifted learners are quite diverse. For African American students, it is important to examine the type of program. For example, some of these learners may feel uncomfortable with pullout programs where they are bused to a different school. In many cases, this type of program can contribute to or exacerbate negative pressures from peers. Peers may not only be curious, but also envious, about what they perceive as special attention to the gifted child.

Demographic Variables

The demographic characteristics of the gifted program—students' and teachers' ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, for example—are also important placement considerations. The more culturally and racially diverse the program (e.g., staff and students), the more likely African American students will sense a goodness of fit, a sense of cohesion and belonging. African American students who feel social estrangement (isolated, alienated, and different) may experience both fright and flight from the gifted program.

Family Concerns

Interviews with students and their family about such concerns or other potential problems would be helpful for ensuring an appropriate placement decision. As Marion (1979, 1980, 1981) noted, parents who had negative school experiences will be hesitant and/or resistant to becoming involved in the school. The more negative the experience, the more the resistance. Thus, depending on past experiences in school and/or in gifted programs, family members may have some of the following concerns: (a) Will my child's test score result in special education placement rather than gifted education placement? (b) Will my child's strengths be perceived as weaknesses? (talkative, questioning, relational learner, visual learner, non-conforming) (c) Will the material taught be relevant? Can my child apply what is taught in school to outside of school? (d) Will there be other African American students in the gifted program? (e) Who can my child turn to for advice? (f) Are there any African American teachers in the gifted program? (g) Will teachers accept my involvement in the classroom? How can I become involved? Will teachers assume that I don't care, that I'm not interested? (h) What, if any, stereotypes do teachers hold about African American children? (i) Will my family structure (single parent/never married; cohabiting; extended) be looked upon negatively by school personnel? Exum (1983) stated that African American parents must also contend with the potential loss of control or authority of the child, the child's loss of respect for the family, the child's loss of respect for the community and/or culture. These concerns are particularly bothersome if parents see schools as negating and robbing African American children of their culture.

Academic Needs

More information must be gathered on gifted African American students' shortcomings in basic skills and their learning style preferences when making placement decisions. Gifted African American students who lack basic skills may have to play catch up and keep up once placed; along with underachievers, they may have high rates of attrition. Ideally, we must make all efforts to place gifted African American students with teachers who are able and willing to accommodate diverse learning styles and skill levels in the classroom—teachers who are effective at differentiating the curriculum and otherwise meeting individual student needs. Another option is to match, to the extent possible, teaching styles and learning styles.

Strategies for Recruitment

The following steps are suggested to facilitate recruitment efforts by teachers, gifted program coordinators, administrators, and other gifted education personnel.

(1) **Identify the target population by ethnicity or heritage**. A contemporary theme in education, anthropology, and sociology has been the importance of acknowledging the history and tradition of people of color. A consistent recommendation has been to avoid the term "minority" because it connotes inferiority. By referring to students by their heritage or ethnicity (African American, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian American), educators can begin to open the lines of communication, as well as to gain mutual respect.

(2) **Develop a profile of the target population or group(s)**. What knowledge do school personnel have about African American students both nationally and at the community or school level? Information on socio-demographic variables such as SES, employment status, educational level, school experiences, family structures, and cultural values and beliefs all provide important information regarding strategies for successful recruitment efforts?

(3) **Develop a Needs Assessment**. While the poor representation of African American students may be visually evident, school personnel should also examine the extent and nature of the discrepancy. For instance, while African American students in general may be underrepresented, the problem may be most severe among African American students who are economically challenged, male, and/or at the secondary level. To what extent are African American students underachieving or represented among low achievers? What concerns do teachers, and African American students and their families have about the gifted programs and related services?

(4) **Identify Allies in the African American Community**. How does one get to know African American students on an intimate level? If recruitment and retention efforts are to be successful, educators must communicate with African Americans on an interpersonal level. Building such a relationship requires attending community events and celebrations, finding the *pulse* of the African American community (usually church and religious leaders, retired teachers, business leaders), and showing interest in understanding African American students as individuals.

Numerous groups and individuals are willing and able to assist with recruitment efforts. Many fraternities and sororities function as service organizations; churches and religious group (especially spokespersons) actively involve themselves in educational endeavors such as providing after-school programs, tutoring, extracurricular activities, camps, and counseling; many programs exist at historically Black colleges and universities, and faculty and students are often actively involved in educational initiatives on behalf of African American students; professional organizations such as the National Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Children's Defense Fund, Coalition of 100 Black Women, local Black professional organizations (and numerous others) provide services and funding for educational initiatives; retired educators also represent key persons in the African American community.

(5) **Work Within and Outside of Gifted Education**. Seek the assistance of professional and educational organizations both within gifted education (e.g., National Association for Gifted Children, Association for the Education of Gifted Underachieving Students, The Association for Gifted Children, Council for Exceptional Children) and outside of gifted education (e.g., Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, National Association for Multicultural Education). Most of these organizations have newsletters and journals with theoretical and empirical data on educational, social, and emotional issues among African American students. While the information may not be specific to gifted African American students, it is nonetheless equally relevant and informative.

(6) **Develop Culturally Sensitive Materials for Distribution**. Work with members of the African American community (including university faculty, community leaders, former teachers, etc.) to develop culturally sensitive material for recruiting gifted African American students. Imagery, visual aids, expressive language, for example, should be used. The information should appear in media that are likely to reach African Americans, including community newspapers, publications by African American organizations (e.g., *Journal of Negro Education*, *Urban League Review*), community bulletin boards, church bulletin boards, service organization bulletin boards, public service announcements, and other communication outlets.

(7) **Allocate Resources**. For recruitment efforts to be successful, educators must be willing and able to commit time and fiscal resources. For instance, economically challenged students may require scholarships to participate in summer enrichment programs; to take private lessons in talent area(s); to take college admissions examinations, test-taking workshops and courses; and to participate in other services offered to gifted students. Dollars must also be allocated for the continuing professional education and development of teachers in gifted education and multicultural education. Similarly, funding is needed to purchase multicultural education material for students and teachers.

(8) **Seek the Support of Power Brokers, and Policy and Decision Makers**. Change is seldom easy. Thus, educators must be prepared to deal with resistance aggressively and proactively. By creating an advisory group of school board members, administrators, parents, community leaders, and other key stakeholders, educators can deal more effectively with resistance. Rely on facts and appeal to reason when communicating concerns regarding inequities in the gifted education program and services.

Recommendations for Retention

African American students are often expected to adapt to gifted programs and services. An inability to adapt significantly undermines their academic achievement and desire to remain in the gifted program. As the following paragraphs indicate, African American students' decisions to drop out of gifted programs relate to the "goodness of fit" between: (a) student characteristics; (b) the gifted program environment; and (c) the degree of compatibility between the two. In essence, the higher the compatibility between the gifted program and the African American child, the more positive the African American students' social integration (feeling connected to peers, teachers, faculty, and the overall social life of the program), and the greater the probability that African American learners will persist in gifted programs.

Variables Affecting Retention

To overcome the possibility of poor retention or high attrition, the following variables must be addressed by educators: (a) classroom climate, (b) teacher preparation in gifted education, (c) multicultural preparation for teachers, (d) multicultural curriculum, (e) preparation for counselors in gifted education and multicultural education, (f) increased faculty diversity, (g) meaningful parent/family involvement, (h) collaboration among school personnel and other professionals, and (i) program evaluation.

Classroom Climate and Culture—Affective and Humanistic Educational Orientations

The basic tenets of an affective, supportive and nurturing classroom environment are important given the reality that classroom climates are often as palpable as the weather; that is, while some schools have a warm, friendly ambiance, others have a cold, foreboding environment (Montgomery & Rossi, 1994, p. 9). It is highly probable that school and classroom climates influence students' performance, with positive and supportive environments more likely to facilitate achievement (Comer, 1988; Firestone & Rosenblum, 1988; Fraser & Fisher, 1982). For instance, Schlosser (1992) citing both her own and other research, reported that the ultimate act of disengagement—school drop out—is influenced significantly by low teacher expectations, lack of teacher understanding, teacher distance and impersonalized classroom environment, teacher directed and lecture-based instruction, poor achievement, feeling isolated from classmates, cultural dissonance and conflicts, little opportunity for success, irrelevant curriculum, and an inability to identify with school.

Several educational reform reports in the last decade (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984) stressed that students' social and psychological developments are more critically important today than ever before. The reports emphasized that students need to have opportunities to develop their talent and potential, to learn about and understand their potential, to increase their self-esteem, to set personal goals, to make informed decisions, to persevere, and to see differences as good and desirable. These recommendations suggest that schools cannot be places where only academics are taught. Humanistic/affective education recognizes the cause-and-effect relationship between students and their social environment, and the importance of educating the whole child (Boy & Pine, 1988). Stated differently, gifted young minds also have inner feelings, emotions, and perceptions that influence when and how the mind functions. According to Childers and Fairman (1986),

> Schools have an obligation to provide a healthy organizational climate that is conducive to optimal personal-social and academic learning. Environments that provide individuals with a feeling of significance, a sense of competence, and a belief that they have some control over important aspects of their environment will enable these individuals to feel more comfortable, feel greater self-worth and, consequently, take more risks. The lack of these elements in public school is a predominant cause of student failure. (p. 332)

Affective/humanistic educators place students at the center of learning. They recognize that: (a) students have individual psychological and social needs; (b) schools can help students to identify, integrate, and balance their psychosocial needs; and (c) that students gain more from an academic curriculum when their psychosocial needs are concurrently met (Boy & Pine, 1988). When gifted African American students are exposed to teachers who are empathetic, accepting, understanding, and genuine, and who foster a "curriculum of caring" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), teachers can expect gains in students' academic achievement and self-concept, as well as increased intrinsic motivation, attendance and class participation, higher levels of thinking, and decreased feelings of alienation. Gelatt (1983) has contended that affective education promotes confidence, connectedness, compassion, and choosing in children, and Boy and Pine (1988) lamented: "We may never know the untold number of boys and girls who could have achieved optimum benefits from their educational experience, but did not because their emotional problems prevented them from doing so" (p. 223).

In other words, classroom climates must be characterized by empathetic understanding, acceptance, sensitive listening, authenticity, presence, immediacy, and equality. In this environment, teachers are acknowledging that students' hearts are as important as their heads (Lewis, 1987).

Locke (1989) recommended several strategies to enhance counselors' effectiveness with racially and culturally diverse students. Theses recommendations are presented here for teachers so as to promote a supportive classroom climate:

> (1) Be open to the existence of culturally sensitive values and attitudes among students; be honest in relationships with minority students;
> (2) Avoid stereotyping racial minority groups (retain the uniqueness of each student); strive to keep a reasonable balance between your views of students as human beings and cultural group members; teach students how to recognize stereotypes and how to challenge biases;
> (3) Ask questions about culturally and racially diverse students. Encourage gifted African American students to discuss and be open about their concerns, beliefs, and cultural values; talk positively with African American students about their physical and cultural heritage; make sure that all students understand that one's race and ethnicity are never acceptable reasons for being rejected;
> (4) Hold high, positive, and realistic expectations for all students;
> (5) Participate in the cultural communities of culturally and racially diverse students; learn their customs and values; share this information with students, teachers, and other colleagues;
> (6) Encourage school personnel to acknowledge the strengths and contributions of racial and ethnic groups; and
> (7) Learn about one's own culture and cultural values. (p. 255)

Gifted Education Preparation for Teachers

In their study, Seeley and Hultgren (1982) found that approximately 75 percent of the university program directors and practitioners in gifted education believed that all professionally trained and certificated teachers should have exposure to education of the gifted. Rogers (1989) maintained that

> It is wishful thinking to suppose that hardworking teachers, without sufficient content knowledge, with special knowledge of gifted children, without time to plan programs, and with limited assistance from supervisory personnel, will be able to alter the educational situation for gifted children to any meaningful degree. (p. 145)

Increased preparation and experience in a given area result in more knowledgeable and better skilled professionals. Research indicates that preparation and experience positively influence the effectiveness of teachers of the gifted. For example, over two decades ago, Weiner and O'Shea (1963) discovered that the attitudes of teachers toward gifted learners are influenced favorably if they had completed at least one course in gifted education. In addition, Orenstein (1984) found that school districts that provided continuous training for teachers of the gifted had the most effective gifted programs. Davis and Rimm (1989) and Copenhaver and McIntyre (1992) asserted that indifferent teachers can become more receptive to gifted programs when exposed to issues in gifted education. Another study reported that those identified as outstanding teachers of the gifted pursued professional growth through courses and workshops more than average teachers of the gifted (Whitlock & Dactle, 1989).

Archambault et al. (1993) found that many states lack certification laws for teachers of the gifted. Specifically, 61 percent of the teachers surveyed had received no staff development in the area of gifted education. Similarly, Karnes and Whorton (1992) found that half of the states require no certification or endorsement in gifted education. Three states make this preparation optional. Only five states have statements of competencies, only 14 require practicum experiences, and only eight require teaching experience in the regular classroom prior to teaching gifted students. Most states require only the bachelors degree of someone who teaches gifted students. As a result, teachers are not always the most reliable sources for identifying gifted learners (particularly from among culturally or racially diverse student bodies) and then referring them for gifted programs or special educational services.

The special preparation of teachers of the gifted is becoming increasingly necessary and well argued in recent literature. Renzulli (1985) reported a court decision, which allowed a teacher of the gifted to retain her position instead of being replaced by a regular classroom teacher with more seniority but no gifted training. The specialization of training required to function as a competent and effective teacher of the gifted has been legally recognized in at least this one instance. Legislation concerning how to educate the gifted student can be found in 17 states (Renzulli, 1985). Of these, 11 currently mandate Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for the gifted, and 15 mandate "due process" proceedings, that is, an opportunity for a hearing before an official of their respective State Education Departments.

Given the aforementioned, it has become more apparent that school districts will be required to provide specialized, trained teachers to manage the education of the gifted and talented in the near future. In essence, those who elect to teach gifted students must possess those requisite knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to nurture their intellectual curiosity, as well as meet social and emotional needs.

Multicultural Preparation for Teachers of the Gifted

To be successful in school and life, gifted African American students have been required to be bicultural, bicognitive, and bidialectic. This is not a choice, but a prerequisite. Seldom are teachers required to take on this difficult task of being bicultural. Current forecasts project that by the end of the Twentieth Century, half of the student population will be comprised of racial minorities (Hodgkinson, 1988). Hence, the retention of African American students in gifted programs may also be influenced by the nature and extent of multicultural education training among both current and future teachers. This preparation—which focuses on non-stereotypical individual differences attributable to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic locale—is necessary to narrow any cultural gap that may exist between teachers and African American students.

A philosophy of multiculturalism must be infused throughout the educational curriculum, including courses in gifted education. Comprehensive preparation should (re)educate teachers and other school personnel so that inaccurate perceptions and uninformed beliefs do not restrict students' learning. According to Hale-Benson (1986), minority children often fail because the culture of the school ignores or degrades their family, community, and cultural backgrounds. Middle-class teachers, reflecting the school's values, may single out for criticism African American and culturally different children's behaviors and values, thereby crushing the social and emotional well-being of gifted African American students and neglecting the strengths that these students bring to the educational workplace.

Kitano (1991) has written one of the few articles specifically on promoting multicultural education in gifted programs. Kitano cogently argued that gifted programs continue to espouse assimilationist rather than pluralistic approaches to cultural diversity. Assimilationists favor the relinquishment of a diverse student's original culture. These students are expected to adapt to the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the predominant culture—the child is responsible for changing. On the other hand, pluralists support the retention of a student's original culture. When accommodation of schooling to the diverse gifted students' experiences occurs, the school bears the responsibility for changing. Certainly, when the culture of the child is valued, educators are more likely to witness fundamental and essential changes in that student's achievement, motivation, and behavior.

B. Ford (1992) proposed a multicultural framework entailing the following six essential components: (1) engaging teachers in self-awareness activities to explore their attitudes and perceptions concerning cultural groups and beliefs, and the influence of their attitudes on students' achievement and educational opportunities; (2) exposing teachers to accurate information about various cultural and ethnic groups, including their historical and contemporary contributions, lifestyles, interpersonal communication patterns, and parental attitudes about education; (3) helping educators explore the diversity that exists within and between cultural and ethnic groups; (4) showing teachers how to apply and incorporate multicultural perspectives into the teaching-learning process to maximize the academic, cognitive, personal, and social development of learners; (5) demonstrating effective interactions among teachers, students, and families; and (6) providing opportunities for teachers to manifest an appropriate application of cultural information to create a healthy learning climate (p. 108).

Thus, workshops, university classes, conferences, and in-service training would include learning focused on comparative education issues, the sociology of education, urban education, African American studies, individual differences, learning styles, and identification and assessment as timely and appropriate topics for such continuing professional education and development.

Curriculum Desegregation

Gay's (1990) timely and intriguing article entitled "Achieving Educational Equality Through Curriculum Desegregation" holds important implications for gifted education. Gay argued that segregation of the curriculum and instructional inequities exist in a wide array of schools (and, by inference, gifted programs) where minority students are denied equal access to high status knowledge and learning opportunities because of biases about their race, gender, nationality, cultural background, and/or social class:

> "Curriculum segregation" occurs when different course assignments, instructional styles, and teaching materials are routinely employed for different groups of students; it constitutes a form of discrimination that mirrors the prejudices and inequities in the larger educational system and in society. In the books and content that are regularly taught, the role models that are commonly presented, the way students are treated in classroom interactions, and the assignment of certain students

> to instructional programs all convey subtle—but powerful—messages about just how separate and unequal education is. (p. 56)

Essentially, multicultural education for gifted students promotes mutual respect and understanding, comradeship, collegiality, and social and cultural awareness and understanding. It also examines conflicts across cultural groups and seeks solutions to historical and persistent inequities. Sleeter and Grant (1987) identified a five-approach typology of multicultural education that sheds light on its goals and purposes: (1) ***teaching the exceptionally and culturally different***, which includes programs intended to assimilate students of color into the dominant culture. In this approach, multicultural education is defined along racial and ethnic dimensions, which views people of color as the primary recipient or benefactor of multicultural instruction; (2) ***human relations approach***, which advocates tolerance and unity in order to develop increased understanding and interactions among different groups; also included here is an emphasis on avoiding stereotypical material in instruction; (3) ***single-group studies approach***, which addresses the contributions and experiences of specific groups, usually in isolation; (4) ***social structural inequality and cultural pluralism approach***, which stresses respect for and celebration of diversity through the infusion of multicultural perspectives throughout the curriculum; and (5) ***multicultural and social reconstruction approach***, which includes programs that accentuate social action and responsibility relative to reforming societal norms and structures in order to achieve equity (also see Goodwin, 1994).

Gifted African American learners are hungry for curriculum that is enriched with content reflecting diversity and the inadequacy of racism, sexism, and discrimination. Because the infusion of multicultural education into the content is empowering for African American students, multiculturalism must continually permeate the curriculum for gifted students. For instance, a Black History month each February provides insufficient time to infuse gifted African American students with pride in their racial and cultural heritage and the contributions of their ancestors to American history. All children, regardless of race, benefit both from multi-ethnic education (which focuses on race and ethnicity) and from multicultural education (which focuses on human diversity and individual differences in gender, race, socioeconomic status, and geographic origins). A lack of racial and ethnic diversity in a school or community cannot be used as a rationale for the absence of multicultural education (Banks, 1988).

Counseling Personnel Trained to Work With Gifted and African American Students

Many articles exist on counseling gifted students, however, the majority focus on career or vocational counseling (Ford, 1995, in press). Less often are the affective and social needs of gifted African American youth addressed in counseling programs; less often are services comprehensive so that students' needs are addressed through full consideration of internal and external variables—social, cultural, psychological, academic, and familial.

School counselors and psychologists must be trained or re-trained to work more effectively with the gifted student population. A significant portion of this preparation should also be in multicultural counseling. Gifted African American students need a place to turn to emotionally in order to express their concerns. Individual counseling, group counseling, peer support groups, bibliotherapy, and family therapy are a few promising practices. This support is especially meaningful and effective if imparted by a professional (e.g., teacher or school counselor) who is trained to work with both gifted and culturally diverse students.

Counselors must understand that the most promising strategies for helping African American students succeed in gifted programs focus on: racial identity (or identity as being both gifted and African American), peer pressures and relations, feelings of isolation from both classmates and teachers, and sensitivity about feeling different or misunderstood (Ford, Harris, & Schuerger, 1993), especially if they are one of few African American students in the gifted program. Ultimately, counselors must teach gifted African American students how to be bicultural—how to cope with cultural conflicts and differences, and how to live and learn in two cultures that may be different (see Ford, 1994, under review).

Recruitment of Racially and Culturally Diverse Teachers Into Gifted Programs

A significant problem in both general and gifted education is the scarcity of African American teachers. Minority teachers comprise approximately 12% of the teaching profession (Education Commission of the States, 1989), African American teachers comprise 6% (Kunjufu, 1993), and White females comprise 76% of the teaching force (Grant & Secada, 1990). These various researchers (and many others) have predicted that the number of minority teachers is expected to decline from 12% to 5%. As such, demographic projections indicate an inverse relationship between the number of minority students and minority teachers; specifically, just as the number of minority students is increasing, the number of minority teachers is decreasing.

The number of African American and minority teachers in gifted programs has not received much attention in the literature. Yet, there is a strong possibility that gifted African American students can go through their entire formal schooling without an African American or minority teacher. This shortage of African American teachers translates into fewer role models and mentors for gifted African American and minority students. It, therefore, heightens the demand for cultural sensitivity by the school. Such sensitivity includes attention to hiring practices, curriculum and instruction practices, professional development, and increased collaboration with other teachers and school personnel. Almost a decade ago, the Carnegie Report (1986) advised that schools should be staffed by teachers who reflect the diversity of the nation's racial and cultural heritage. Further, the Report indicated that schools should not be places where both White and minority children are confronted with almost exclusively White authority figures.

Meaningful and Substantive Parent and Family Involvement

Parental and family involvement are fundamental to a healthy system of public education. As Chavkin (1989) asserted, the successful education of minorities is the prerequisite to their social advancement, and parent involvement is the key to this successful education. Substantive parental involvement has resulted in increased achievement test scores among African American students (Hochschild, 1984).

Further, when parents are substantively involved, the likelihood of both recruiting and retaining gifted African American students increases. Parents also play a major role in developing giftedness in children, particularly those parents who are interested and committed to their children's education (Bloom, 1985; Bloom & Sosniak, 1981; Feldhusen & Kroll, 1985; Ford, 1993b). Productive parental strategies include reading to gifted children, exposing them to new experiences, spending time with them on school-related tasks, encouraging their language development, enhancing their affective development, and encouraging high aspirations (Karnes, Shwedel, & Steinberg, 1984). Karnes et al. also found that 90% of the parents they surveyed involved themselves directly in their gifted children's schooling by taking part in the teacher selection process and in parent organizations. This is becoming increasingly evident in states like Kentucky where site-based councils are mandated by July of 1996 (Ford & Harris, 1994c).

Relative to African American youth, Scott-Jones (1987) found that academically successful children had mothers who provided more books, set clearer academic goals for their children, and were more involved in schoolwork than other African American parents. Clark (1983) found that high-achieving African American students have parents who initiated and had frequent contact with the schools, played a major role in the educational process, provided achievement-oriented experiences, held high expectations, and deferred to the child's knowledge in intellectual matters.

Slaughter (1987) suggested that African American parents must play at least four roles in their children's educational achievement: parent as decision maker; parent as supporter; parent as mediator; and parent as teacher. She adds that the tendency in American schools to provide African American children with a biased learning environment practically forces parents to involve themselves in the formal learning process.

Educators must remember that parents, a child's first teachers, play an integral role in African American students' motivation to achieve and succeed academically. Ample data indicate that substantive parent involvement is necessary to enhance student achievement, particularly their involvement in meetings, workshops, parent-teacher conferences, volunteer work in the classroom, observers or paid positions, board memberships, fundraising activity, and community advocacy (Slaughter & Kuehne, 1987/1988).

Harry (1992) recommended that indispensable and substantive African American parent (and family) involvement should be manifested in four important roles: (1) parents can join formal assessment teams; (2) parents can present reports, including official documents and professional reports; (3) parents can help shape policy as members of advisory committees and local educational agencies, on school site-based management teams, and as teachers' aides; and (4) parents can serve as advocates and participate in liaison activities where they offer advice and input in the assessment and placement of their children (pp. 128-129).

We must also involve other family members in the educational process. Research indicates that African American youth are more likely than other youth to live in extended family situations. The changing structure and diversity of families has become an increasingly important theme among family professionals. For instance, Pearson, Hunter, Ensminger, and Kellam (1990) found as many as 84 extended family structures (35 included grandmothers) among 100 African American households. Therefore, when parents and other family members are substantively involved in the formal learning process, the probability of both recruiting and retaining gifted African American students may increase.

Collaboration Among Professionals

Some years ago, Grites (1979) complained of the line of demarcation between educators, especially between those in K-12 and postsecondary schools. Teachers working with gifted students at the elementary and secondary levels should form alliances with post-secondary educators, school counselors and psychologists, teachers in other specialized disciplines (e.g., special education, urban education, multicultural education) to gather increased information about meeting the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted African American students. The more professionals involved in the endeavor, either directly or indirectly, the greater will be students' opportunities for successful recruitment and retention. We must enlist families, communities, businesses, churches, and other agencies to complement the mission of schools and gifted programs. Educators need partners in helping students face today's challenges.

Early Identification and Examination of Anecdotal Records

To ensure that gifted African American students have a smooth matriculation throughout their schooling, educators are encouraged to examine school records for persistent academic problems or social difficulties. An area in need of special attention is underachievement. An examination of underachievement indices is essential, particularly as underachievement among African American students is most common in grade 3 (Comer, 1988; Hale-Benson, 1986; Kunjufu, 1993); ironically, this is also the time at which most gifted programs begin.

By examining school records, teachers can better understand whether underachievement is subject-specific versus global, situational versus general, chronic versus temporary, and personal, teacher or peer related. Teachers can also explore records for potential indicators of giftedness; the comments of parents and former teachers, inconsistent test scores and grades, discrepancies between subtest scores, and discrepancies between tests, for example, may represent important indicators of potential. This information also empowers teachers and other school personnel with the information necessary to develop proactive, prevention strategies, as well as intervention strategies.

Program Evaluation

Teachers, and other educators, and decision-makers are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of their gifted program, as well as identification, placement, and retention practices. As Figure 4 reflects, without looking inward, it will be difficult to look outward to students who seek our guidance and assistance. Important questions relate to the program's philosophy, teacher preparation, program demographics, social and emotional resources, family involvement, student assessment and evaluation, and curriculum and instruction.

Strategies for Retention

As alluded to in the previous sections, once students have been recruited, the job has just begun. The task now becomes one of keeping African American students interested in and committed to the gifted program and services. Some strategies to address issues related to persistence are presented below.

(1) **Set clear expectations for students**. Persistence and commitment to any cause is essential for success, which requires that educators explain the goals of the gifted program and services, as well as expectations of students.

(2) **Enhance students' school competencies.** Success in school requires proficiency in skills related to school success—effective study skills, research skills, and test-taking skills (standardized and teacher-made). Self-understanding and self-awareness are also important for success. Teachers and counselors should help gifted African American students gain a better understanding of their learning styles, area(s) of giftedness, as well as strengths and shortcomings. Relatedly, educators must take active and early actions to prevent or reverse underachievement.

(3) **Establish cohort/affinity/peer groups**. Affinity groups should include 5 or 6 students who are assigned to a mentor (e.g., teacher, advisor). These students and their mentor serve as keepers for each other; they provide mutual support, and a sense of responsibility for the success of other members.

I. What is the school district's philosophy of gifted education and definition of giftedness?

(a) In what ways are the philosophy and definition inclusive? To what extent are the strengths of African American (and other minority) students represented in the definition?
(b) Does the gifted education program reflect community needs? Are students retrofitted to the program or is the program reflective of student needs?
(c) To what extent are contemporary definitions of giftedness adopted?

II. Is the gifted program reflective of community demographics?

(a) To what extent is diversity evident relative to gender, race, and socioeconomic status?
(b) What, if any, discrepancy exists between the community and school demographic characteristics?

III. Are there opportunities for continuing professional education and development in gifted and multicultural education?

(a) Are faculty and other school personnel encouraged and given opportunities to participate in workshops, conferences, university courses, etc.?
(b) Does a library exist for teachers? Does it contain up-to-date resources (e.g., newsletters, journals, books)?

IV. Are assessment practices equitable?

(a) Are the measures used valid and reliable for the student population?
(b) What biases exist relative to the selection process?
(c) How are instruments administered (individually or in a group)?
(d) Which instruments appear most effective at identifying the strengths of minority students?
(e) Are the combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment practices used? If so, is one given preference or higher weight than the other?
(f) What are the primary purposes of assessment?
(g) Are personnel trained to administer and interpret test results?

V. What, if any, mechanisms are in place to assess and address affective or non-cognitive needs among students (that is, social and emotional needs, environmental and risk factors)?

(a) To what extent are support personnel trained in gifted education?
(b) To what extent are support personnel trained in multicultural education?
(c) How diverse is the teaching faculty relative to race, gender, and socioeconomic status?

VI. To what extent are parents and other family members involved in the formal learning process?

(a) In what ways are parents/families encouraged to become and remain involved?
(b) How diverse are the parents/families involved?
(c) Are extended family members encouraged to participate?

VII. To what extent does the curriculum reflect a multicultural orientation?

(a) Is multicultural content infused throughout the curriculum?
(b) Is the content pluralistic (i.e., reflects diversity relative to gender, race, and other socio-demographic variables)?
(c) To what extent are learning styles preferences/differences accommodated?

Figure 4. Gifted Program Evaluation Considerations.

(4) **Provide comprehensive and continuous services.** Educators and other school personnel are encouraged to empower gifted African American students to feel that destiny is on their side, and that they are the future. Providing students with comprehensive services is empowering. *Career and vocational guidance* is needed to provide students with practical experiences that will increase and/or sustain their vision of the future. Mentorships and internships, in particular, provide opportunities for gifted African American students to see success in action. Equally important is information on scholarships, colleges and universities, and other educational opportunities and options. (see Wright & Olszewski-Kublius, 1992)

Personal guidance and counseling are also needed to help those African American students experiencing personal and interpersonal difficulties (e.g., peer relationships, self-concept, racial identity, test anxiety, stress). Family, individual, and group counseling can be utilized to address the personal and interpersonal needs of gifted African American students. And as stated earlier, *academic guidance and counseling* related to improving students' academic competencies are needed, including tutoring, remediation, enrichment, and basic academic skills training.

Practical Implications: Putting the Research to Use

The following sections describe important questions that parents, teachers, and counselors may have as they seek to facilitate and nurture the academic, social, and emotional success of gifted African American students. These successes play important roles in making both recruitment and retention possible.

Parents

What Are Learning Styles and How Can They Be Assessed?

Learning styles represent one's preferred way of making sense of information and stimuli. Finding out about your child's learning styles is one way to unlock his/her potential and abilities, and to increase the chances of doing well in school. All children can learn and, as students, they learn in different ways. Some students learn best when they see and touch material; others do quite well by listening rather than being actively or physically involved. Some students learn best when details are given, others prefer to see the big picture first, followed by details.

By listening to, talking with, and watching your child at play or doing homework, for instance, parents can gain a better understanding of how children think about things, and in which situations they learn best. For example, how do they respond to directions? Do they prefer to see *and* hear directions? Do they like a lot of detail and information? Would they prefer getting only a little information to solve problems? Are they better at taking the big picture and finding its parts, or at having the pieces first and then creating the big picture? Do they learn better when sitting at a desk, or in a more relaxed and casual setting? Do they like bright or dim lights? There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and some people have no strong preferences because they can adjust to new or novel situations.

How Can I Help My Child Cope With Negative Peer Pressures?

Get to know your child's friends and their families. In what ways are your families different? similar? Do you share similar values and beliefs, especially about school, achievement, and child rearing practices? If you know and feel comfortable with the family, your child's relationships with their children may be more positive.

Teach your child how to say no and to mean it. Children have rights—the right to say no, the right to be treated with respect and dignity, the right to make mistakes, the right to express their ideas, and the right to feel good about themselves. Develop strong morals by teaching them the difference between right and wrong, and the effects their decisions and behaviors may have on others. Posing "what if" questions can be especially helpful because it teaches children to use problem solving skills, and to think about actions and consequences. It is also important to keep the lines of communication open, to let your children know that they can talk to and with you—that you (or someone close to the family) will listen actively to them.

Teach your children how to be independent and assertive by building their self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-identity, for self-understanding and self-love often precede love of others. Children who feel confident and good about themselves are less likely to be influenced in negative ways by peers. There are several ways to build self-esteem and identity in children, and to help them deal more effectively with social relationships:

(a) Help children set goals that are realistic and practical so that they can experience success;
(b) Tell and show children that they are special; give positive and constructive feedback and encouragement—even when they are not successful. For example, compliment them on their effort, interest, motivation, and the time they put into a project or activity;
(c) Encourage extracurricular activities to promote responsibility, social skills and interaction, leadership, and social competence. Being a role model for your child and introducing him/her to community leaders and older successful African American students can also promote self-esteem and identity. When in social situations, teach children how to talk confidently with others and how to initiate conversations and friendships.
(d) Find books that you and your child can read in which the main character (or one that your child can identify with) is facing peer pressure or other problems. These books can teach children how to handle similar situations more effectively. It also helps them to see that they are not alone; other children face similar problems.
(e) Encourage independence. For example, let children make decisions about some of the family activities; give them a voice by listening to their reasons for not wanting to do something, even if you do not agree.
(f) Instill self-pride and understanding within children by encouraging them to draw pictures of themselves, to write stories, plays, biographies, or to use their particular talents to increase self-awareness and self-understanding. These activities can be cathartic, an important learning experience for gifted African American children. This information also gives parents an opportunity to learn about children's concerns, likes, dislikes, perceived strengths and shortcomings.
(g) Instill cultural, racial, and self-pride, as well as an appreciation for one's heritage by having children read African proverbs and autobiographies of famous African Americans, such as Ralph Bunche, Sojourner Truth, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Barbara Jordan, Thurgood Marshall, Arthur

Ashe, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Have them play Dr. King for a day and make a speech, poem, or story about an important issue for them. Every family has a history—promote self-esteem, identity, and pride by studying or making a family tree and/or organizing a family reunion.

(h) Encourage within children an understanding that everyone makes mistakes. This is especially important for gifted students, many of whom may be perfectionists and their own worst critics. Compliment children for even very small successes and improvements. Erik Erikson (1968) once stated that the most deadly of all things is the mutilation of a child's character—give your child character.

Ultimately, as parents, we must hold high and realistic expectations for our children so that their successes outweigh their failures. Doing so gives them opportunities to believe in themselves and their abilities. When children feel empowered—confident, positive, assertive—they can cope better with peer relationships, negative peer pressures, social problems, and issues they encounter at home, in school, and in other settings.

How Can I Tell If My Child Is Gifted?

Children have different gifts and talents. However, there are characteristics that gifted children seem to share: (a) learns quickly and easily; (b) sense of humor; (c) very curious (e.g., has a strong need to know, asks many questions, demands a reason or explanation); (d) very committed to things and activities that are personally relevant and interesting (e.g., keeps collections of things); (e) large vocabulary (e.g., says words and phrases that you do not expect for his/her age; expresses ideas well); (f) insightful (sees relationships between ideas and events, even when others do not); (g) creative (e.g., unusual ideas, big imagination, elaborates on ideas); (h) exceptional memory (e.g., sometimes remembers things that others have long-forgotten, including details, dates, names, and events); (i) independent (e.g., has own ideas about things; doesn't like others to help, even if the task is difficult; enjoys challenges); and (j) sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

Torrance (1978, 1989) identified strengths that appear common among gifted African American students: an ability to express feelings and emotions; ability to improvise with common materials; articulate in role playing and storytelling; enjoys and is very capable in the visual arts; enjoys and is very capable in creative movement, dance, and dramatics; uses expressive and colorful speech; fluent and flexible in nonverbal media; enjoys and displays strong skill in small-group (cooperative) learning and problem solving; responds to the concrete; shows strong expressiveness to the kinesthetic (movement) modes; expresses self well with gestures and body language; and has a keen sense of humor.

The strengths of every child must be looked at individually. Many times, parents know that their child is gifted, but find it difficult to explain or describe. Talking with school personnel and parents of children in the gifted program can be helpful.

In What Ways Can I Get Involved in the School and My Child's Education?

Parents are children's first teachers, and our responsibility to educate children does not end when they begin school. Parents can become involved in schools in several ways. Visit the school as often as you can; attend parent meetings, workshops, parent-teacher conferences; volunteer to work in the classroom; join board memberships; participate in fundraising and development activities; and join parent-teacher groups and organizations. If you cannot get involved, get other family members involved—grandparents, aunts, cousins, older siblings, neighbors. It is important that someone advocate for children, and play an active and a consistent role in the school.

Another way to make sure that children succeed in school is to make learning a priority in the home. Make sure that children have a place and time to study; do your homework when they do theirs. For example, pay bills, write letters, or balance your checkbook while they are studying. Similarly, help children with their homework (when necessary) and let them teach you about the topic. This sharing gives parents the opportunity to see if students understand the material and lets them feel competent and empowered. Don't think that you must have all of the answers; it's okay to say "I don't know, let's find out together."

There are many other ways to increase the chances that your children will do well in school. Give the gift of time. Make reading a daily event, limit television time, visit the library, and read magazines and newspapers together to learn about world events and about free activities in the community. Decorate their room with learning materials, for example, maps and school work. Get children to think positively about school and the future (including college) as often as possible. One strategy is to decorate their bedroom with college pennants, hats, cups, etc. Talk with children about school experiences. What do they like or dislike about school? Why? How are peer and teacher relationships? By talking with children, parents can get answers to the following questions: How is their attendance? tardiness? behavior? Do they complete assignments? Are assignments completed on time? Do they follow directions and participate in class? What do the teachers see as the child's strengths and shortcomings? One of our greatest goals as parents is to help our children answer the following questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What problems will I encounter? What are my strengths? In short, two lasting bequests we can give our children are roots and wings.

Teachers

How Can I Tell Whether My Students Are Underachieving?

It can sometimes be difficult to determine whether a student is underachieving. However, the issues listed in Figure 3 are a good place to begin assessment. It is essential that teachers observe children for signs of boredom, disinterest, and apathy regarding school and gifted education programs. Procrastination, perfectionism, sloppy and incomplete work, spurts of interest, and impulsiveness may represent other indications of underachievement. Do not rely on test scores and grades alone when making this assessment. The more qualitative information, the better and more comprehensive the assessment. Assessment must also include a consideration of (a) what the child already knows, (b) what they want to know, and (c) what they should know.

By avoiding an exclusive reliance on quantitative information, teachers can concentrate more on qualitative information. It is important to consider the kinds, types, scope, and duration of underachievement (see Whitmore, 1980 for a comprehensive review).

Kinds of Underachievement

(a) Unknown/hidden—performance on aptitude and achievement measures are consistently low, which hides the ability of the child who is functionally untestable; the student's achievement is hidden by satisfactory performance, and the teachers have no evidence that the student is capable of much higher achievement/performance; the student has high test scores and grades, but the teacher feels he/she can do better or is capable of performing better.

(b) High aptitude scores, but low grades and achievement test scores.
(c) High standardized achievement test scores, but low grades due to poor daily work (regardless of whether aptitude scores reflect the students' ability).

Types of Underachievement

In an early study, Roth (1970) categorized underachievement as follows: (a) neurotic—the student is preoccupied with his/her relationships with parents and suffering from substantial anxiety and guilt over it; (b) non-achievement syndrome—the student chooses not to make an effort, therefore failing; and (c) adolescent reaction—there is extreme independence seeking and attempting to do everything their parent(s) and other adults oppose.

Whitmore (1980) studied types of underachievement specifically among gifted students and reported that types of underachievement can be categorized as: (a) aggressive—disruptive, talkative, clowning in class, rebellious, and hostile; (b) withdrawn—uninterested, bored, and do not try to participate; and (c) a combination—erratic, unpredictable, and vacillates between aggression and withdrawal.

Educators are also advised to consider the duration of underachievement. Is underachievement temporary/situational or chronic? Temporal underachievement results from a temporary period of disturbance (e.g., divorcing parents; illness; new interest; moving to a new school; personality conflict with teacher). Chronic underachievement is characterized by a pattern that has been established for a long period of time, and the student is usually below average in all subject areas; there are no indications that it is being created by a temporary situation (could be due to learning style, disability, etc.).

The scope of underachievement must be assessed by teachers as well. Is underachievement evident in one specific ability? For instance, the student has the potential of achieving very well in a particular subject or skill, but does not do so because of lack of interest or motivation. Is underachievement in one broad content area? For instance, is it language-based? science-based? math-based? Is underachievement general in nature? For instance, is the student performing less well than his/her assessed aptitude would predict in all subject areas? The student is usually below average in all subjects.

Finally, what are the effects of underachievement on the individual and others? With mild to moderate underachievement, there is no evidence of negative effects on the underachiever or others in his/her life; emotional adjustment and social behavior appear normal, and the student does not seem discontent or disturbed. When underachievement is moderate to severe, a lack of success has created low self-esteem and self-derogatory attitudes, which may result in poor coping behaviors (e.g., withdrawal and aggression) that hinder growth and increase social destruction. Poor coping behaviors can also result in peer isolation, and negative family and teacher relationships.

How Can I Accommodate Learning Styles in the Classroom?

First, teach with empathy. Second, serve as the catalyst for and mediator of learning. Third, design the curriculum so that it is not someone's curriculum, but everyone's curriculum; remember that "style" of mind does not mean "quality" of mind, and adhering to traditional curriculum fails to consider individual differences in learning. Fifth, treat your students as you would your own children. These five principles represent the "welcome mat" to the classroom.

Look for authentic ways to assess students, such as performance-based tasks and portfolios. In addition to (or instead of) closed-ended tests, give short answers and essays.

Let students create products and find alternative ways to indicate that the material has been mastered.

There is no recipe of "how to's" for accommodating learning styles. Intuitively, all teachers know that students have different preferences for learning and communicating their understanding of the material. Being flexible and creative are the keys to meeting students' needs. To gather a better understanding of how gifted African American students' learning styles vary, teachers are encouraged to talk with, observe, and listen to them. More specific recommendations can be found in Dunn and Dunn (1992a) for elementary students and Dunn and Dunn (1992b) for secondary students. While the books are not centered around the specific learning style preferences of gifted and/or minority students, they contain a wealth of information and resources that are directly and indirectly related to these students.

How Can I Promote a Healthy Social and Cooperative Classroom Climate?

An important characteristic of any classroom is a family environment characterized by support, nurturance, respect, and understanding. Teachers are encouraged to openly discuss issues related to social injustices in the classroom. For example, if social ostracism is noted during cooperative learning activities, in the cafeteria, or other settings, teachers should discuss issues surrounding prejudice, whatever its form (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status). With the assistance of school counselors, activities can be developed for classroom guidance or other activities. Ponterotto and Pedersen (1993) and Pedersen and Carey (1994) have written timely books on effectively addressing prejudice in the classroom. Buddy systems also help reduce social isolation for gifted African American students, especially if they are new to the school or gifted program.

In What Ways Are Tests Biased?

As stated earlier, bias in testing and assessment can result from several factors. These biases can be evident in both standardized tests and teacher-made tests:

(1) *Language differences exist between the test (or test maker) and the student.* Perhaps the most obvious example is that we continue to give students tests in English when their primary language is not English; or we test children on their command of standardized English when they communicate best in other dialects (e.g., African American English). While this latter example is rather controversial, current practices often equate command of the English language with intelligence and achievement.

(2) *The test questions center on the experiences of middle-class White students.* For example, one widely used achievement test asks students to indicate whether restaurants have wine, waiters, plates, or food. Some children have never been to a restaurant, particularly one that has waiters and/or wine.

(3) *The test answers support middle-class values, which are often rewarded with more points.* For instance, one intelligence test asks children what they are supposed to do if they find a lost wallet containing money. Children must choose between returning the money or keeping it, the former being the "correct" response. It seems debatable as to whether one's response is indeed an indication of intelligent behavior or indicative of moral development and behavior.

(4) *The test favors verbal students.* The tests require a great deal of reading, word recognition, vocabulary, sentence completion, etc. Many tests also require verbal responses; similarly, test formats are often closed-ended in nature, leaving little room for creative, divergent thinkers to demonstrate

their abilities, leaving little room for gifted African American students to demonstrate their strengths and learning style preferences.

(5) *The tests do not consider the extent to which some students may not be oriented toward achievement and other non-cognitive variables.* A lack of motivation, task commitment, effort, and interest can have negative effects on students' performance. Certainly, a lack of motivation causes much waste of students' intellectual and psychological potential (Boy & Pine, 1988).

Counselors and Psychologists

What Does Research Say About the Learning Styles of Diverse Students?

The following is an overview of research on learning styles preferences among gifted (Dunn, 1989; Dunn & Price, 1980; Griggs & Price, 1982), African American (Dunn et al., 1989, 1990; Hale-Benson, 1986; Shade & Edwards, 1987), and underachieving students (Dunn, 1990; Dunn & Griggs, 1988; Saracho & Gerstl, 1992). Professionals are encouraged to remember that individual, as well as within and between group differences exist, and that the following characteristics represent general guidelines.

Gifted students tend to prefer formal learning classroom designs, less structure in learning material, and auditory modes of presentation. In general, gifted students also tend to be tactile and kinesthetic learners, independent learners, and persistent, motivated and task-committed. Underachieving students tend to show shortcomings in convergent problem solving, poor analytical skills, poor motivation, task commitment, and persistence (they prefer tasks that have intrinsic appeal). Additional characteristics include impulsiveness and anxiety, non-conformity and creativity. Finally, African American students tend to be field-dependent, holistic, and relational learners. They are often visual learners, with a keen sense of humor, verbal productivity, and imagination. They learn better in cooperative rather than competitive situations, in social situations, and when experiences are tactile and kinesthetic.

In What Ways Can I Counsel Students Through Their Preferred Learning Styles?

It is maintained that just as teaching may be ineffective if we do not accommodate learning styles, counseling may be ineffective. For instance, if students have a strong preference for an informal design, counselors should have furniture that they relax or lounge on; use low lighting if students have a strong preference for it; and conduct group sessions (when appropriate) for social learners. Counselors should work with other school personnel to schedule basic subjects at times when students are most alert. According to research by Dunn and Dunn (1992a, 1992b), most students are not "morning" people; however, most teachers are. Further, only 28% of elementary students are early birds; most are alert and able to function better at 10:00 a.m. or later. Forty percent of high school students are early birds, but the majority are most alert in the late morning or afternoon.

Tactile and kinesthetic learners should be actively involved in the counseling process. They may prefer assignments and projects, for example, over talking and listening. Moreover, students who are not socially oriented may prefer individual rather than group counseling sessions. Griggs (1990, 1991) has presented an extensive model of counseling gifted students through their preferred learning styles. Readers are also referred to Ford (1994, under review) for more specific recommendations on counseling gifted African American students.

What Are Some of the Basic Characteristics of a Culturally Sensitive Counselor?

Sue and Sue (1990) have delineated several basic characteristics of counselors who are sensitive to and appreciative of diversity among their clients. The following list is an example of sample characteristics of culturally sensitive counselors: authenticity, willingness to shed stereotypes, willingness to understand and to learn from clients, a desire to listen, open to change, willingness to self-disclose and self-reflect, empathetic, understands the nature of individual differences, and has an active stance toward life.

What Are Some of the Key Issues Gifted African American Students Bring Into Counseling?

When working with gifted African American students, counselors must keep in mind that self-disclosure may be difficult and a long process. Numerous studies indicate that many minority groups perceive counseling negatively, as a sign of weakness and a negative reflection on the family. Further, the less African American students trust the counselor, the less likely they are to self-disclose. Therefore, caution is warranted in interpreting lack of self-disclosure as resistance and/or lack of self-awareness among gifted African American students.

In addition to working with gifted African American students on their academic self-concept, counselors may have to work with them on their social self-concept and identity. For example, it may be important to explore how it feels to be in the gifted program, the quality of their peer relationships, and their family beliefs and values. To promote self-concept and identity, it is important to expose gifted African American students to role models through mentorships and projects, for example. In these situations, students can acquire social support, as well as study, tutoring, and test-taking skills.

Be flexible—meet gifted African American students on their own turf or at a neutral setting (e.g., restaurant, park, library) rather than the confines of the office. This safer setting can facilitate open communication and self-disclosure by gifted African American students because they are less likely to feel inhibited. Adopting eclectic counseling approaches may also prove productive to the helping process relative to promoting self-esteem, self-efficacy, social competence, and healthier academic and social self-concepts. Bibliotherapy, cinematherapy, journal writing, role playing, visualization, and other techniques are helpful; students may also need to acquire assertiveness training and conflict resolution skills.

Ultimately, guidance and counseling will be effective with gifted African American students if: (a) there is a concerted effort and commitment to involve significant others in the helping process—parents, family members, teachers, and peers; and (b) counselors adhere to the ABCs of counseling—focus on Affect, Behavior, and Cognition. These approaches result in a greater sense of identity (Who am I?), connectedness (Am I important to others?), power (What control do I have over my life?), security (Whom can I turn to for help?), and purpose (Where am I going? Do I have a future?).

Summary and Conclusions

Like all students, gifted African Americans represent a heterogeneous group, which necessitates working with students as individuals. As such, the issues discussed in this paper are meant to guide teachers and other school personnel in their work with gifted

African American students. While some of the issues discussed are unique to gifted African American students, others are not; they are also experienced by other minority youth, both gifted and non-gifted. Our knowledge-base regarding gifted African American students is limited; there are few books, articles, and other scholarly information on these students.

We must pay closer attention to the myriad factors that affect African American students' participation and representation in gifted programs and services. Encouraging the potentials and talents of all children requires a broadened vision of giftedness that reflects an understanding that talent varies markedly with cultural, ethnic, economic and linguistic backgrounds (Hadaway & Marek-Schroer, 1992). Accordingly, professionals in gifted education must ensure that programs are equitable and defensible, that they are inclusive rather than exclusive, and that minority, economically challenged, underachievers and other gifted students have an equal opportunity to learn in a nurturing and stimulating educational environment.

The recommendations for increasing and maintaining the representation of African American students in gifted education programs are not exhaustive; rather, they offer a point from which to begin ensuring the success of all gifted students, particularly those who have yet to reveal their true capabilities. To continue relying on unidimensional rather than multidimensional assessment strategies, to ignore contemporary theories of intelligence, and to perceive cultural difference and diversity as inconsequential to learning and academic success is to contribute to African American students' attrition from gifted programs.

There are many steps that educators of the gifted can take to empower gifted African American students. To be successful in gifted programs, African American students must feel empowered, which comes from having a sense of belonging and connectedness with the gifted program, with students, with teachers, and with the curriculum. It comes from having teachers who understand and respect cultural diversity, and who promote multicultural education practices in their classrooms. It comes from enriching and diversifying the demographics of the gifted programs relative to students, teachers, and other personnel who can serve as mentors, role models, and advocates. Empowering gifted African American students requires having comprehensive support services in place—supportive peer groups, school counselors, psychologists and other personnel who are trained to work with both gifted learners and minority students, and who are sensitive to the issues that attend being both gifted and a minority. Empowering and, thus, retaining African American youth in programs for the gifted also necessitates encouraging substantive family involvement, welcoming parents and significant others (e.g., particularly grandparents and extended family members) into the formal learning process at all grade levels.

The following principles are offered as general guidelines for educators working with gifted African American students:

(1) The gifted program should focus on students' individual strengths, the basic culture of the child, and the skills necessary for success in the majority culture (Baldwin, 1989); accordingly, teachers of gifted students require extensive and substantive preparation in both gifted and multicultural education;

(2) Be mindful of the heterogeneity within and between African Americans; the diversity is evident relative to beliefs, values, learning style preferences, socioeconomic status (Frasier, 1989), geography (Baldwin, 1989); family structure (Ford, 1993b), and other demographic variables;

(3) Counseling and affective development are essential components of programs for gifted African American students (Maker, 1989; Ford, 1994,

under review). Issues related to underachievement, poor peer relationships, and self-concept must be examined for they have a significant influence on students' academic success and social well-being; thus, support services and personnel are needed, specifically persons trained to work with gifted and minority children;

(4) Throughout the identification process, a profile of students' individual strengths and weaknesses should be drawn. Baldwin (1989), Frasier (1989), Hale-Benson (1986), Torrance (1977), and others have provided useful guidelines from which to understand cultural strengths and the contextual nature of giftedness;

(5) Identification must be multimodal and multidimensional, including qualitative and quantitative measures and information; assessment and identification instruments should be valid and reliable;

(6) Students should not be retrofitted to the gifted program; rather, the program should reflect student and community needs;

(7) Teachers must examine their *a priori* beliefs, stereotypes/biases, and expectations when working with African American students; when negative, these beliefs can interrupt students' learning and success; low and negative perceptions can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy for students. Teachers are also encouraged to openly and directly discuss inequities in the classroom;

(8) Family members should be partners in the educational process; related to this issue is the need for gifted African American students to have exposure to mentors, role models, and other professionals to serve as advocates;

(9) The curriculum should be multicultural and interwoven throughout all aspects of gifted education curriculum and instruction; and

(10) A philosophy of equity must permeate gifted education programs and services relative to identification and assessment, curriculum and instruction, evaluation, and all other aspects of teaching and learning.

Our efforts to identify and place African American students in gifted programs (i.e., recruitment) have increased in recent years, owing much to the Javits Act of 1988, as well as Torrance, Passow, Frasier, Renzulli, Baldwin, and other scholars in gifted education. However, more concerted efforts must be aimed at the retention of these students once placed. In this way, we ensure that African American youth experience a sense of inclusion and cohesion within (rather than estrangement from) the myriad programs offered gifted children.

Future Directions: The Need for Increased Research

Where do we go from here? There are many unanswered questions regarding how best to meet the needs of gifted African American students. Research is needed to provide specific information on the attrition rates of African American students from gifted programs. What factors influence the attrition rates? What are gifted African American students' perceptions about gifted education programs and services? What are their perceptions about being identified as gifted?

Research is also needed to explore the underrepresentation of minority teachers in gifted education. While there are numerous studies and conferences on minority teachers in education, a review of the literature revealed no published empirical or theoretical research on this topic in gifted education. What is the percentage of minority teachers in gifted education? What school districts have been exemplary in hiring and retaining minority teachers?

A third area for future research relates to underachievement. What programs or practices are in place to prevent and reverse underachievement among gifted students? What is the extent and nature of underachievement among gifted African American students? Included in this research should be attention to non-intellectual, school, and environmental factors, as well as explorations by gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level.

Research on successful family/school partnerships in gifted education also seems necessary. The results of Javits' projects whose goals are to increase parent involvement among economically challenged and minority students in gifted education will be a welcome addition to the field (see Callahan, Tomlinson, & Pizzat, 1993). In addition to these projects, what gifted education programs have substantive and meaningful parent/family involvement among gifted underachieving, African American students, and other children of color? What roles do parent and family members play? What is their impact on students' achievement and social and emotional well-being in school?

Fifth, there is a continuing need to conduct educational policy research incident to the study of equity and the meaningful provision of gifted education. This research ranges from disparate and disproportionate impact to teacher certification and outcomes for gifted education. While state and federal policies play important roles in promoting opportunities for gifted children to learn, they cannot fulfill their roles and responsibilities by conducting business as usual; for overly ambitious mandates, narrow strategies, myopic vision, and scatter-shot initiatives undermine rather than promote quality and equity for all children. Policies must be defined in ways that increase the performance of gifted African American students by providing equal access to opportunities to learn.

Taken collectively, this research agenda can become a *cause celeb* for positive changes in how we envision and set out to accomplish the challenges facing education in general, and gifted education in particular. As indicated throughout this paper, there are many challenges associated with recruiting and retaining gifted African Americans students; these challenges must be addressed proactively and aggressively to guarantee that both excellence and equity permeate gifted education programs and services.

Guidelines

Guideline 1: A culture of assessment rather than a culture of testing promises to capture the strengths of gifted African American students.

Research support: Testing provides quantitative information on students (e.g., IQ score, achievement level), while assessment describes students' areas of strengths and shortcomings. Assessment is diagnostic, prescriptive, and proactive; it allows educators to develop a more comprehensive profile of the abilities and needs of gifted African American students.

Guideline 2: There is no "one size fits all" intelligence or achievement test. Multidimensional identification and assessment practices offer the greatest promise for recruiting African American students into gifted programs.

Research support: The (over)reliance on unidimensional tests for identifying gifted African American students has proven ineffective. Multidimensional assessment examines such factors as learning styles, test anxiety, and motivation; multimodal assessment examines students' particular area(s) of giftedness (e.g., creativity, intellectual, psychomotor, social) using various assessments such as students' products, portfolios, and autobiographies. The combination of qualitative and quantitative assessment practices provides a comprehensive profile of giftedness among African American students.

Guideline 3: Identification instruments must be valid, reliable, and culturally sensitive. If any of these variables are low or missing, the instrument should not be adopted for use with African American and other minority students.

Research support: African American students tend not to score well on standardized tests that are normed on middle-class White students. Further, standardized tests often lack cultural sensitivity relative to African American students' learning styles, values, and experience. Thus, they are biased against racially and culturally diverse students. As a result, standardized tests often provide little if any diagnostic and prescriptive information for educators.

Guideline 4: To increase the representation of African American students in gifted programs, educators must adopt contemporary definitions and theories of giftedness.

Research support: Howard Gardner, Joseph Renzulli, and Robert Sternberg have proposed culturally sensitive theories of giftedness. These definitions are inclusive because they support the notion of talent development, they acknowledge that giftedness is context-dependent and multifaceted, and they avoid the exclusive use of unidimensional tests and related identification practices.

Guideline 5: Comprehensive services must be provided if the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education is to be successful.

Research support: To increase the sense of belonging and ownership of African American students in gifted programs, educators must address their academic as well as psychological, social, and emotional needs. Gifted African American students who feel isolated, alienated, and misunderstood by teachers and peers are less likely to persist in gifted education programs than students who feel empowered. Services should focus on counseling needs, including academic counseling and vocational guidance. Options for individual, peer, and small group counseling should also be available to facilitate guidance experiences.

Guideline 6: Teachers who are trained in both gifted education and multicultural education increase their effectiveness in identifying and serving gifted African American students.

Research support: Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel can increase their effectiveness with gifted African American students if they have substantive preparation in multicultural education and counseling. This training increases their sensitivity, understanding, and respect for individual differences among students. Such training can also increase their ability to identify and serve gifted African American students. Ultimately, experienced teachers are more likely to ensure that a philosophy of pluralism permeates gifted education programs.

Guideline 7: To prevent underachievement, gifted students must be identified and served early.

Research support: Underachievement among African American students often begins in grades 3 and 4—the time at which gifted programs often begin. Without early identification and services, promising and capable African American students will have diminished opportunities for being identified or referred for assessment in later years.

Guideline 8: Qualitative definitions of underachievement offer more promise than quantitative definitions in describing poor achievement among gifted African American students.

Research support: Quantitative definitions of underachievement rely exclusively on high test scores. Gifted students who suffer from test anxiety, who confront test bias, who have learning style differences, and who have poor motivation are unlikely to receive high test scores. Qualitative definitions take into consideration motivation, self-concept, self-esteem, learning styles, and other factors not examined on traditional, standardized intelligence and achievement tests.

Guideline 9: The representation of African American students in gifted programs must be examined relative to both recruitment and retention issues.

Research support: Much of our effort concerning the representation of African American students in gifted education has focused on the recruitment component—identification and placement. Considerations regarding retention must be addressed as well. After successfully identifying and placing gifted African American students, educators must focus on such variables as school climate, the demographics of faculty and students, school personnel preparation in gifted and multicultural education, curriculum and instruction, and program evaluation.

Guideline 10: Family involvement is critical to the recruitment and retention of African American students in gifted education. Parents and extended family members must be involved early, consistently, and substantively in the recruitment and retention process.

Research support: Parents are effective and reliable sources of identification for gifted children. Parents and extended members (e.g., grandparents, aunts) can provide invaluable information on the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted African American students. Information on development, health, interests, extracurricular activities, learning styles, peer relations, and identity issues can only be provided by family members in many instances.

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